



SOUTHERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

Dear Councillors

Your attendance is requested at the Ordinary Council Meeting to be held in the Council Chambers, Southern Downs Regional Council, 64 Fitzroy Street, Warwick on **Wednesday, 27 May 2026** at **9:00AM**.

Notice is given of the business to be transacted at the meeting.

Rachel Brophy

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

22 May 2026

Attendance

1pm Presentation of Staff Service Certificates

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WEDNESDAY, 27 MAY 2026 Ordinary Council Meeting

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1. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**
2. **PRAYER & CONDOLENCES**
3. **ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**
4. **READING AND CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**
- 4.1 **Ordinary Council Meeting - 22 April 2026**


Recommendation

THAT the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 22 April 2026 be adopted.

5. ACTIONS FROM COUNCIL MEETINGS

5.1 Actions from Council Meeting 22 April 2026

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Chief Executive Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council receive the report.

REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of Actions resulting from resolutions from the Ordinary Council Meeting held 22 April 2026.

A copy of the Actions Report is attached.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Actions from Ordinary Council Meeting 22 April 2026 [↓](#)



ACTIONS FROM ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING 22 APRIL 2026

MEETING DATE	ITEM NUMBER	AGENDA ITEM	ACTION OFFICER	ACTION TO DATE	COMPLETED
22/04/2026	5.1	Actions from Council Meeting 25 March 2026	Brophy, Rachel	06 May 2026 11:45am Seymour, Marion - Completion Completed by Seymour, Marion on behalf of Brophy, Rachel (action officer) on 06 May 2026 at 11:45:07 AM - Noted	6/05/2026
22/04/2026	9.1	Correspondence	Brophy, Rachel	06 May 2026 11:45am Seymour, Marion - Completion Completed by Seymour, Marion on behalf of Brophy, Rachel (action officer) on 06 May 2026 at 11:45:21 AM - Noted.	6/05/2026
22/04/2026	12.1	Chief Executive Officer - Status Report	Brophy, Rachel	06 May 2026 12:01pm Seymour, Marion - Completion Completed by Seymour, Marion on behalf of Brophy, Rachel (action officer) on 06 May 2026 at 12:01:32 PM - Noted.	6/05/2026
22/04/2026	12.2	Local Resilience Action Plan	Simonelli, Pia	07 May 2026 3:31pm Simonelli, Pia - Completion Completed by Simonelli, Pia (action officer) on 07 May 2026 at 3:31:14 PM - Noted. LRAP forwarded to QRA.	7/05/2026
22/04/2026	13.1	Financial Services - Financial Report as at 31 March 2026	Betts, Melissa	28 Apr 2026 9:23am Betts, Melissa - Completion Completed by Betts, Melissa (action officer) on 28 April 2026 at 9:23:23 AM - March Finance Report Noted	28/04/2026
22/04/2026	13.2	Operational Plan 2025/26 - Third Quarter Update	Keir, Dianna	28 Apr 2026 9:28am Keir, Dianna - Completion Completed by Keir, Dianna (action officer) on 28 April 2026 at 9:28:19 AM - Council resolution noted.	28/04/2026
22/04/2026	13.3	Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee Meeting held 23 March 2026	Keir, Dianna	28 Apr 2026 9:28am Keir, Dianna - Completion Completed by Keir, Dianna (action officer) on 28 April 2026 at 9:28:31 AM - Council resolution noted.	28/04/2026
22/04/2026	13.4	Local Government Boundary Realignment - Goondiwindi Regional Council - Lot 14 on B34379 and Lot 15 on SP332758 - Rabbit Fence Road KARARA	Glode, Patrina	01 May 2026 2:51pm Glode, Patrina - Completion Completed by Glode, Patrina (action officer) on 01 May 2026 at 2:51:03 PM - letter being drafted for customer. Verbal confirmation provided to customer.	1/05/2026



ACTIONS FROM ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING 22 APRIL 2026

^MEETING DATE	ITEM NUMBER	AGENDA ITEM	ACTION OFFICER	ACTION TO DATE	COMPLETED
22/04/2026	13.5	Renewal of Tenure - Expiry up to 31 December 2026	Glode, Patrina	01 May 2026 2:51pm Glode, Patrina - Completion Completed by Glode, Patrina (action officer) on 01 May 2026 at 2:51:22 PM - renewal process started for contracts.	1/05/2026
22/04/2026	14.1	Wallangarra Rural Water Supply Area Adjustments	Sweetlove, Graham	28 Apr 2026 4:54pm Sweetlove, Graham - Completion Completed by Sweetlove, Graham (action officer) on 28 April 2026 at 4:54:19 PM - Customer has been notified of the outcome.	28/04/2026
22/04/2026	14.2	26_035-Sewer Main Inspection and Relining	Johnston, Shaun	07 May 2026 10:39am Johnston, Shaun Noted 07 May 2026 10:41am Johnston, Shaun - Completion Completed by Johnston, Shaun (action officer) on 07 May 2026 at 10:41:29 AM - Noted and in process	7/05/2026
22/04/2026	15.1	Citizen of the Year Policy Amendments	Stanley, Maggi	07 May 2026 11:45am Seymour, Marion - Completion Completed by Seymour, Marion on behalf of Stanley, Maggi (action officer) on 07 May 2026 at 11:45:04 AM - Amendments noted and Policy referred to Governance to update and publish to the Website.	7/05/2026
22/04/2026	15.2	Southern Downs Youth Council Meeting - 26 February 2026	Organ, Sue	29 Apr 2026 8:56am Organ, Sue - Completion Completed by Organ, Sue (action officer) on 29 April 2026 at 8:56:35 AM - Council Resolution noted	29/04/2026
22/04/2026	17.1	Appointment of Audit and Risk Management Committee Chairperson	Bigby, Anthony	18 May 2026 9:00am Seymour, Marion - Completion Completed by Seymour, Marion on behalf of Bigby, Anthony (action officer) on 18 May 2026 at 9:00:12 AM - The appointed Chairperson has been formally notified.	18/05/2026

6. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST


7. MAYORAL MINUTE

Nil

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 Notice of Motion - Temporary Event Permit for Maryvale Progress Association

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Chief Executive Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Notice of Motion – To Be Moved by Cr Wantling

THAT Council waive and refund in full the Temporary Event Permit fee charged to the Maryvale Progress Association for their upcoming Winter Solstice 2026 event.

Report

Cr Wantling submitted the attached Notice of Motion (**Attachment 1**) requesting that Council waive and refund in full the Temporary Event Permit fee charged to the Maryvale Progress Association for their upcoming Winter Solstice 2026 event.

Cr Wantling provides background information from the Maryvale Progress Association who advised that while they were appreciative of the 50% not-for-profit discount that had been provided by Council, the remaining fee still placed a financial burden on a volunteer run community organisation delivering a free event for the benefit of the wider community. The Association also advised that the suggestion had been made to apply for Council's Community Grants Program in futures years, nothing that the available funding round for this event had already been fully allocated.

The event is a free community initiative and all funds raised through the event are to be reinvested directly back into community activities and local initiatives.

Council is asked to consider the Motion.

Officer's Comments

The Maryvale Solstice event is to occur on the 20 June 2026, with camping from the 18-21 June 2026. The event venue will be on the Council reserve on Wienholt Street, Maryvale.

The purpose of an event application is to assess whether the event will be run with appropriate public health and safety measures in place. This includes such things as appropriate number of toilets, licenced food vendors, insurance, potable water supply and notification of emergency services.

The lowest event application fee is \$607 (for an event other than a music entertainment event and expected attendance less than 2000 people). A 50% reduction was applied to this event due to it being run by a non-profit organisation, and therefore the application fee was \$303.50.

A request for assistance was also made for the provision of bins by Council, however Council does not provide bins for loan, and alternative waste management options were discussed with the event organiser.

No fee/application is applied for the use of Council land, this is considered as part of the event application to simplify the process for event organisers.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Notice of Motion [↓](#)



Notice of Business

Councillor: Wantling

Date: 20/5/26

Council Meeting: _____

Item of Business:

That Council waive and refund in full the Temporary Event Permit fee charged to the Maryvale Progress Association for their upcoming Winter Solstice 2026 event.

Relevant Background Information


I have been approached by the Maryvale Progress Association and whilst they appreciate the 50 per cent not-for-profit discount already provided by Council, the remaining fee still places a financial burden on a volunteer-run community organisation delivering a free event for the benefit of the wider community.

On 16th March, I raised this matter directly with the Chief Executive Officer, who advised that the matter had been referred to the appropriate staff member for consideration. Subsequently, the Association was advised that they may wish to apply for Council's Community Grants program in future years. However, by stage the available funding rounds had already been allocated, with the next round not opening until 1 July, after the Winter Solstice event had already taken place.

The event is a free community initiative designed to bring residents and visitors together, encourage community connection, and support local participation in the Maryvale area. As a non-for-profit organisation, all funds raised through the event are reinvested directly back into community activities and local initiatives.

With Council increasing the costs of temporary event permits this financial year, concerns have been raised regarding the impact these fees are having on small volunteer organisations, particularly those delivering free community events in the smaller towns and villages across the Southern Downs.

Waiving and refunding the permit fee would recognise the important role volunteer organisations such as the Maryvale Progress Association play in strengthening community spirit, supporting local engagement, and delivering events that contribute positively to the social wellbeing of the region.

Signature 

Council Meetings Policy – Section 8.5 Giving Notice of Business

Giving Notice of Business

1) Any Councillor requesting a matter to be included on a meeting agenda, must give notice in writing to the Chief Executive Officer at least seven (7) calendar days before the notice of business is required to be given. The Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) must send all valid notice of business to all Councillors.

2) To be valid, a notice of business must be submitted on the approved form and:

- Be framed as succinctly as possible;
- Not include argument or discussion or excessive background material;
- Be relevant to the good order of the business of the Council; and
- Not be an action that could be dealt within operational procedures.


3) Subclause (1) does not apply to the consideration of business at a meeting if the business:

- Is already before, or directly relates to a matter that is already before, the Council, or
- Is the election of a Chairperson to preside at the meeting, or
- Is a matter or topic put to the meeting by the Chairperson

9. READING AND CONSIDERATION OF CORRESPONDENCE

9.1 Correspondence - May 2026

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Chief Executive Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT the report of the Chief Executive Officer in relation to Correspondence be received.

REPORT

1. **Mayor Hamilton to Deputy Premier** confirming a copy of the draft Southern Downs Planning Scheme for State Government had been sent for review and approval. And seeking his assistance in ensuring the planning scheme is returned to Council by the end of April (copy attached).

Action: Noted

2. **Mayor Hamilton to Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers** in relation to the Queensland Governments recent announcement the Toowoomba to Warwick Pipeline will be delivered in two stages and highlighting Council concerns in relation to detailed water security modeling and Allora bore field pipeline connection that are yet to be addressed by the Department (copy attached).

Action: Noted

3. **James Lister MP** providing an update on Broadwater State Forest from Minister for Environment and Tourism regarding the issues raised on track conditions and unauthorised use, and outlining increased control measures and commitment to ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the tracks within the forest (copy attached).

Action: Noted.

4. **Mayor Hamilton to James Lister MP** thanking him for the update and advice from the Minister for Environment and Tourism.

Action: Noted.

5. **Dr Nick Mitzevich from National Gallery of Australia** providing an update on the National Gallery of Australia's 'Sharing the National Collection Program.' The Australian Government has announced online that Warwick Art Gallery is hosting Guan Wei, *Cloud B#3*, 2012 as part of the program for a period of 2 years.

Action: Noted

- 6. Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers** in response to correspondence from Mayor Hamilton regarding the recent discussion of Council to refuse the Development Application at 396 Keoghs Road, Elbow Valley, and advising that the Minister has requested that the Department undertake a review of the assessment process for the water licence previously granted by the State Government (copy attached).

Action: Noted.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Correspondence from Mayor Hamilton to Deputy Premier [↓](#)
2. Correspondence from Mayor Hamilton to Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers [↓](#)
3. Correspondence from James Lister MP [↓](#)
4. Correspondence from Mayor Hamilton to James Lister MP [↓](#)
5. Correspondence from Dr Nick Mitzevich [↓](#)
6. Correspondence from Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers [↓](#)

Office of the Mayor



20 April 2026

The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning
Minister for Industrial Relations
PO Box 15009
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Email: deputy.premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Deputy Premier

Thank you for your letter dated 28 November, and to your commitment to early and ongoing engagement with local governments on planning scheme reviews and legislation changes that affect local communities.

On 19 December 2025 I wrote to you to confirm that your department had received a copy of the draft Southern Downs Planning Scheme for State Government review and approval.

This planning scheme is the result of many months of hard work by Council staff and listening to our community through a highly successful community engagement campaign. Having a revised and modern Planning Scheme will enable our Council to address housing supply challenges and drive business attraction for our region.

We have had a number of discussions with your department and your office to achieve implementation of the new planning scheme on 1 July 2026. For this to be achieved Council would need the planning scheme back from your department by the end of April.

Over the last month, including at an industry session last Thursday 16 April 2026, developers across the region are increasingly pushing Council for the adoption of the new scheme, as it significantly affects lot sizes, secondary dwellings and infill development, all of which are critical to addressing our housing supply challenges. Adoption of the new scheme will also allow Council to move to an eScheme, which will reduce application costs and time for developers and residents.

In line with our discussions in Allora on 2 October 2025 I would be very thankful for your assistance in ensuring the Planning Scheme is returned to Council by the end of April.

 sdrc.qld.gov.au  1300 MY SDRC (1300 697 372)  mail@sdrc.qld.gov.au
 PO Box 26, Warwick QLD 4370  ABN 59 786 792 651

On behalf of Council, I look forward to our continued partnership with the State Government as we work towards adopting the Southern Downs Planning Scheme in 2026.

Yours sincerely



Melissa Hamilton
Mayor



Office of the Mayor



20 April 2026

Hon Ann Leahy MP
Minister for Local Government and Water
Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers
GPO Box 2247
BRISBANE QLD 4002

Email: lgwv@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister Leahy

As expressed in my letter of 16 March 2026 to the Premier, his commitment to provide water security for Stanthorpe is welcome news for our community who still feel the effects of the 2019-20 drought. We thank the Crisafulli Government for the commitment, and we are ready to work in partnership with you to finally deliver this for our region.

Water security is the number one priority for our Council and we have been advocating for this to both state and federal governments since the 2024 election. As you know, we have made a budget submission for 2026-27 focusing on drought-proofing the Southern Downs.




At our recent meeting with your water advisor and Mr James Lister MP, it was encouraging to hear that the Department is now working through the feasibility and business case analysis for water security for Stanthorpe, and we look forward to an update as soon as possible.

In relation to your letter dated 27 March and the Queensland Government's recent announcement regarding the Toowoomba to Warwick (T2W) pipeline, you have advised that the project is now to be delivered in two stages: stage one being Toowoomba to Greenmount (which is funded) and stage two being Greenmount to Warwick, which will be progressed when it is required. Whilst this is a disappointing outcome for Council and the Southern Downs community, we remain committed to working closely with your department, to determine the appropriate triggers that will inform a future government decision to construct stage two. However, we still have several outstanding concerns (outlined below) that have not been properly addressed by your department.

Detailed water security modelling

Council have formally requested a copy of the detailed modelling that underpins the revised water security advice, which has yet to be received. This request was first made in our meeting of November 2025, and we seek your assistance in expediting this matter with the Department.

Council staff have been verbally informed that the modelling may shift to a drought return period of 1 in 45 years, rather than the 1 in 10 year interval used as part of the T2W project. With current rainfall and forecast conditions indicating another drought, Council is keen to resolve this matter as soon as possible.

 sdr.c.qld.gov.au  1300 MY SDRC (1300 697 372)  mail@sdr.c.qld.gov.au

 PO Box 26, Warwick QLD 4370  ABN 59 786 792 651

Allora bore field pipeline connection and T2W Warwick Reservoir

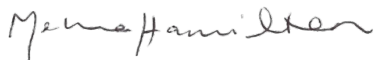
Following our November 2025 meeting, I discussed with you by phone the \$80M funding commitment for the Allora bore field pipeline connection and \$40M for the Warwick Reservoir. The Allora bore is a vital part of our drought planning and provides an additional year's supply to the Warwick water network, whilst the Reservoir is critical infrastructure to both operational and water security planning for Warwick. Council is of the view that both components are essential to any first-stage delivery and are seeking reassurance that they will remain within the T2W Stage 1 scope.

As the urban water distributor, Council's focus remains on urban and community water security, ensuring that households, businesses, schools, and essential services across the region have access to a safe and reliable water supply into the future. Given the low summer rains in the region, this is front of mind for many of our businesses and residents.

We also acknowledge the importance of water security for our agricultural sector right across the region, and we know that this will also be a matter of focus for your government.

I appreciate your recent support for the consideration of our water security package as part of the 2026-27 State Budget process and for advocating this to the Australian Government. I look forward to continuing our ongoing partnership to deliver water security for the Southern Downs.

Yours sincerely



Melissa Hamilton
Mayor



JAMES LISTER MP

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

STANTHORPE ELECTORATE OFFICE: - 9 VICTORIA STREET, STANTHORPE 4380 TELEPHONE : 07 4524 7700 - 1800 811 827
WARWICK ELECTORATE OFFICE: 56 KING STREET, WARWICK 4370 TELEPHONE: (07) 46618070
E-MAIL – SOUTHERN.DOWNS@PARLIAMENT.QLD.GOV.AU
ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: P.O. Box 444 STANTHORPE 4380

Cr Melissa Hamilton
Mayor
Southern Downs Regional Council
PO Box 26
WARWICK QLD 4370

Dear Melissa,

Further to our previous correspondence regarding Broadwater State Forest, I have now received correspondence from the Hon Andrew Powell, Minister for Environment and Tourism, following representations made on your behalf.

The Minister has advised the following information:-

“The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation acknowledges the issues raised by Southern Downs Regional Council regarding track conditions at Broadwater State Forest. This state forest is managed by the Granite Belt Management Unit of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P), which is responsible for the management of national parks and state forests in the wider Granite Belt area.

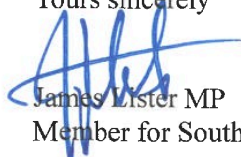
I am advised that in relation to unauthorised motorbike use within Broadwater State Forest, QPWS&P has increased patrols in the area and implemented additional deterrent measures, including securing the lower gate on Glenlyon Drive and installing new ‘Motor Vehicles Restricted’ signage at key locations. These activities not only pose safety risks but also contribute to further degradation of forest tracks. QPWS&P will continue to monitor the situation and prioritise resources toward track maintenance, particularly in preparation for upcoming planned burns.

I am also advised that staff movements related to leave, temporary redeployments, response to bushfires and other reasons do cause staff numbers to fluctuate at times, however, regional priority has been placed on ensuring a full complement of staff at any of our locations that service high visitor parks wherever possible, which includes the Granite Belt Management Unit. Permanent recruitment and other temporary backfilling arrangements are progressing where there are vacancies. Additional regional officers specialising in fire and pest management that have been employed as part of the More Rangers, Better Neighbours program are also available to support work at Broadwater State Forest when needed.”

I must also issue an apology for my statement in my previous correspondence that I believed you had been contacted directly by the local police on this matter. I was misinformed at the time and upon seeking clarification I was advised that it was a neighbour of the forest, who had issued a similar complaint, that the police had spoken with. I am sorry for this misunderstanding.

I trust that, going forward, management of the Broadwater State Forest will see a better outcome for the property. Thank you again for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely



James Lister MP
Member for Southern Downs

24 April 2026

Office of the Mayor



Tuesday, 5 May 2026

Mr James Lister MP
Member for Southern Downs
PO Box 444
STANTHORPE QLD 4380

Dear Mr Lister

Thank you for your recent correspondence and for providing an update following advice from the Hon Andrew Powell MP, Minister for Environment and Tourism, regarding Broadwater State Forest.

I appreciate you advocating on behalf of Council and the community on this matter. The update outlining increased patrols, additional deterrent measures, and the commitment to ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the forest tracks is very encouraging. It is reassuring to see that the concerns raised are being acknowledged and addressed, particularly in relation to safety and environmental impacts.

Council welcomes the Minister's commitment to prioritising resources and maintaining appropriate staffing levels within the Granite Belt Management Unit, and I am hopeful these actions will lead to improved outcomes for the area moving forward.

Thank you again for your continued support and for keeping Council informed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Melissa Hamilton'.

Melissa Hamilton
Mayor



**From Dr Nick Mitzevich
Director
National Gallery of Australia**

6 May 2026

Councillor Melissa Hamilton
Mayor of Southern Downs Region
64 Fitzroy St
Warwick QLD 4370
melissa.hamilton@sdrcl.qld.gov.au

Dear Councillor Hamilton,

RE: Sharing the National Collection update: Warwick Art Gallery, QLD

I am writing with exciting news from the National Gallery of Australia. The Australian Government, under the National Cultural Policy, 'Revive', has committed to supporting the Gallery's landmark [Sharing the National Collection Program](#). Over the course of this Program, some of our most treasured works of art will be shared as long-term loans with regional and suburban cultural institutions across the country, increasing cultural provision and access to art for all Australians.

The Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for the Arts, has announced [online](#) that Warwick Art Gallery in Queensland, is hosting the following work as part of the Sharing the National Collection Program for a period of two years:

Guan Wei, *Cloud B#3*, 2012

Cloud B#3, was created by Beijing born artist, Guan Wei who settled in Australia in 1993 producing his large-scale paintings and sculptures out of his Sydney studio. The work is now on display for public viewing with alongside the gallery's permanent collection.

As the home of the largest collection of art in Australia, comprising over 155,000 works of art, including the world's most substantial collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, we are thrilled to be able to share this work on behalf of all Australians across our country as we believe access to the national collection should be available to everyone.

If you have any further questions about the Sharing the National Collection Program, please contact the Head of Art Across Australia, Tracy Cooper-Lavery: tracy.cooper-lavery@nga.gov.au.

We hope you will have the chance to enjoy our noteworthy work while it is on display in your community.

Yours sincerely,

National Gallery of Australia
Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country
Parkes Place East, Parkes ACT 2600, Australia
GPO Box 1150, Kamberrri/Canberra ACT 2601, Australia
T+ 61 2 6240 6411 nga.gov.au

**The National Gallery acknowledges the
Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, the Traditional
Custodians of the Kamberrri/Canberra region,
and recognises their continuous connection
to culture, community and Country.**

ABN 27 855 975 449

Minister for Local Government
and Water and Minister for Fire,
Disaster Recovery and Volunteers

DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND



Queensland
Government

Our ref: CTS 04224/26

13 MAY 2026

Councillor Melissa Hamilton
Mayor
Southern Downs Regional Council
PO Box 26
WARWICK QLD 4370

Email: mail@sdrcl.qld.gov.au

1 William Street Brisbane
GPO Box 2247 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7420
Email lgwv@ministerial.qld.gov.au
Website www.qld.gov.au

Dear Councillor Hamilton

Thank you for your letter dated 5 March 2026 regarding the recent decision by Southern Downs Regional Council (the council) to refuse the development application (DA) for a proposed water bottling facility at 396 Keoghs Road, Elbow Valley.

I appreciate you taking the time to write and raise the concerns that many people in your community have about this matter. I welcome council's unanimous decision on the 25 February 2026, to refuse the development application based on planning considerations. I also acknowledge that council's decision has now been appealed by the applicant and the matter is currently before Queensland's Planning and Environment Court.

While the decision to approve or refuse the DA was a matter entirely for the council under the planning framework, the proponents do hold a water licence that was assessed and granted in accordance with the provisions of the *Water Act 2000* (the Water Act). The Water Act provides the statutory framework used by the Queensland Government to ensure water resources are managed sustainably and also protects the rights of entitlement holders. I am also pleased to advise that given the community concern I have asked my department to undertake a review of the assessment process, which is currently underway, and report back to me on the findings.

As part of the licensing process, the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (the department) carefully reviewed detailed hydrological assessments to understand and evaluate any potential impacts on neighbouring bores and the surrounding environment. Based on this technical assessment, the department determined that extraction of up to 96 megalitres (ML) per year could occur sustainably, consistent with the requirements of the Water Act.

I want to reassure you that protecting local groundwater users was a key consideration in this assessment. A specific condition on the water licence limits extraction from the shallow colluvium aquifer, relied upon by nearby landholders, to no more than five ML per year. This safeguard was intentionally applied to minimise any potential impacts on existing domestic and stock bores. Most of the authorised extraction will occur from the deeper fractured rock aquifer within the Stanthorpe Adamellite, which is generally not used by most local landholders.

In reaching its decision, the department considered both the hydrogeological characteristics of the aquifers and the importance of protecting existing water users. The conditions placed on the licence were designed specifically to ensure these protections are in place.


However, given the level of community concern regarding this project, I have asked the department to undertake a review of the assessment process and report back to me on the findings. The review is still underway.

The Queensland Government recognises that groundwater resources are vitally important to regional communities. Community concerns about water security are taken seriously, and the department remains committed to managing Queensland's water resources in a sustainable and transparent manner.

Thank you again for writing and sharing your concerns. I look forward to continuing to work with you on matters that are important to the Southern Downs community.

If you have any questions, please contact my Chief of Staff, Mr Angus McCaffrey, on 0407 073 631 or email Angus.McCaffrey@ministerial.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



ANN LEAHY MP
Minister for Local Government and Water
Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers

cc Mr James Lister MP
Member for Southern Downs
Email: southern.downs@ministerial.qld.gov.au


10. RECEPTION AND READING OF PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

Nil

11. PORTFOLIO REPORTS

11.1 Portfolio Report - Mayor Hamilton - Prosperous Communities

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Research and Advocacy Support Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council's Prosperous Communities Portfolio Report be received.

REPORT

Mayor Hamilton has submitted a Portfolio Report providing an update on Advocacy – Ministerial Visits.

Attached is a copy of the Portfolio Report.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Portfolio Report - Prosperous Communities [↓](#)



PORTFOLIO REPORT

Mayor Melissa Hamilton

Prosperous Communities: Economic Development, Regional Advocacy, Intergovernmental Relations

PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES – MAY 2026

ADVOCACY – MINISTERIAL VISITS

Cr Carla Pidgeon meeting with Minister Bowen at announcement of Sally Higgins as Youth Ambassador for COP31.

ADVOCACY – DEPUTY MAYOR REPORT

Report on meetings during travel:

- April 25th – Attended the ANZAC DAY Dawn Service, March & Morning Service in Charleville. This ANZAC Day ceremony was one of the best that I have ever had the opportunity to attend. The Guest Speaker was a local ex-Vietnam Vet now in his 80’s and received a standing ovation after his heartfelt speech.
- Met with the Murweh Shire Mayor Shaun Radnedge at the morning service and later met the President of the Charleville RSL Committee.
- April 28th – Met with the Barcaldine Regional Council Mayor Rob Chandler & Deputy Mayor Milynda Rogers
- May 1st – Met with Winton Shire Council Mayor Cathy White
- May 5th – Met with McKinley Shire Council Mayor Janene Fegan, Deputy Mayor Shauna Royes & Cr Fiona Malone in Julia Creek. These Councillors are all Lions Club members and hosted the Dinner Under the Stars event.

Meeting with these Councillors gave me an opportunity to talk about our region and what we have to offer for tourists. They welcomed me and were very interested in our region. Some of them were familiar with the Southern Downs while others were keen to come and visit in the future.

MONTHLY REPORT

External meetings, Council sessions, delegations and forums attended by the Mayor during the month of April 2026:

DATE	WHO/WHERE	DETAILS
01 April 2026	Council Information Session	Warwick
02 April 2026	Meeting Ready Communities Program	Stanthorpe



	Radio Interview 4WK	Phone
08 April 2026	Council Information Session WarwickCon – Youth Week Event	Warwick Warwick
09 April 2026	Triple M Radio Interview Morning Tea at Oak Tree Retirement Village Radio Interview 4WK Constituent meet-and-greet	Phone Warwick Phone Warwick
10 April 2026	Meeting with Telstra, Warwick Polocrosse and Morgan Park Raceway Constituent meet-and-greet LGAQ fuel update	Warwick Warwick Online
14 April 2026	Meeting with Acciona Meeting with LGAQ Welcome meeting for new Audit & Risk Committee member	Brisbane Brisbane Brisbane
15 April 2026	Meeting with John Dee Meeting with Broken to Brilliant Radio Interview TenFM	Warwick Warwick Stanthorpe
16 April 2026	Constituent meeting Constituent meeting Radio Interview 4AK Meeting with John Dee Constituent meet-and-greet	Warwick Warwick Phone Warwick Warwick
17 April 2026	Constituent meeting D’aguilar Wildlife Pop-up	Killarney Warwick
18 April 2026	Pre-ANZAC Day dinner – Warwick RSL Sub-branch	Warwick
20 April 2026	Meeting Warwick Art Gallery Constituent meeting	Warwick Warwick
21 April 2026	Stanthorpe State High School ANZAC Assembly Wallangarra Wellness Day	Stanthorpe Wallangarra
22 April 2026	Ordinary Council Meeting Council Information Session	Stanthorpe Stanthorpe
23 April 2026	Budget Engagement Community Pop-up with Crs Harslett and Deane Radio Interview 4WK Constituent meeting Budget Engagement Community Pop-up with Crs McDonald, Pidgeon, Deane and Harslett	Stanthorpe Phone Warwick Warwick
24 April 2026	SCOTS ANZAC Dawn Service Warwick State High School ANZAC Day Ceremony Warwick Christian College ANZAC Day Ceremony Amiens State School ANZAC Day Assembly	Warwick Warwick Warwick Amiens
25 April 2026	Stanthorpe Dawn Service Killarney ANZAC Parade Warwick ANZAC March and Service Ballandean ANZAC Day Service	Stanthorpe Killarney Warwick Ballandean
26 April 2026	Budget Engagement Community Pop-up – Crs Harslett and Deane	Stanthorpe

2




27 April 2026	Budget Engagement Community Pop-up – Crs McDonald, Pidgeon, Harslett and Deane Rose City FM Radio Interview Budget Engagement Community Pop-up - Crs McDonald, Pidgeon, Deane and Bartley	Leyburn Phone Yangan
28 April 2026	Budget Engagement Community Pop-up – Crs Pidgeon, Harslett, Bartley and Wantling (Cr McDonald representing Council at 100 th birthday celebration) Budget Engagement Community Pop-up – Crs Pidgeon and Deane	Killarney Allora
30 April 2026	Meeting Stanthorpe & Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce Radio Interview 4WK Meeting B.P.Wharton Group	Stanthorpe Phone Warwick



12. EXECUTIVE SERVICES REPORTS

12.1 Chief Executive Officer - Status Report

Document Information

 Southern Downs <small>REGIONAL COUNCIL</small>	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Chief Executive Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council note the Chief Executive Officer's Status Report.

REPORT

1. Questions on Notice

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held 22 April 2026 the following Questions on Notice were raised by Councillors.

Officers' advice in relation to those questions is outlined below:

Councillor	Agenda Item	Question on Notice	Response
Cr Wantling	13.1 Financial Services – Financial Report as at 31 March 2026	Can Councillors receive a breakdown of the Spent and Committed – what has actually been spent?	The list of actual capital expenditure and commitments by projects has been provided to Councillors.
Cr McDonald	13.2 Operational Plan 2025/2026 – Third Quarter Update – Drought Resilience Package	Can Councillors be advised of the outstanding works that are ready to go to market?	<p>The only outstanding work is the upgrade of the Warwick Water Treatment Plant (not including the Smart Meter project). The works have been broken up into several smaller projects. The status is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switchboard: design (Main and Dosing Shed) is underway. • A local engineering works has been engaged to manufacture a replacement of the PAC mixing tank. • Dosing pipework: RFQs are being prepared to seek prices from local plumbing firms to lay carrier water lines from the chemical dosing shed to the inlet works, if needed. • A price is being sought from Council's Preferred supplier for a

			<p>new dosing board (including 2 dosing pumps) for ACH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process and operational planning for shutdown of treatment plant to complete works is under way in consultation with operational staff and the Regulator. • Design of some mechanical components of the clarifier has been let to local engineering firm.
Cr Bartley	13.2 Operational Plan 2025/2026 – Third Quarter Update – Drought Resilience Package	What defines a good bore?	<p>The investigation looked at allocations where a bore and/or an allocation was not being fully utilised.</p> <p>The criteria used for the study was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A search radius of 10 km from Warwick and Allora town centres • A search radius of 20 km from Stanthorpe town centre (within the Queensland border) • A search radius of 5 km from the Yangan town centre • Unused entitlements greater than 60 ML/annum <p>For Stanthorpe it was found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 groundwater entitlements with a total allocation of 67.5 ML/annum • One of these is for SDRC for 30 ML/annum <p>There are no substantial unused entitlements within a reasonable radius of Stanthorpe.</p>

2. Other Business


Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

12.2 FY26 Unspent Event Funds

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer: Director Strategy, Growth and Stakeholder Engagement	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	ECM Function No/s:	

Recommendation

THAT Council reallocate the \$40,000 (excl GST) unspent event sponsorship funds to:

- Granite Belt Wine Tourism Association - \$10,000 (excl GST);
- Stanthorpe and Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce - \$10,000 (excl GST);
- Warwick Chamber of Commerce - \$10,000 (excl GST); and
- Minor events, as assessed against the Grants Policy (PL-CS075) and associated Event Sponsorship Guidelines - \$10,000 (excl GST).

REPORT

Background

The disbursement of \$40,000 (excl GST) to the Stanthorpe Festival Association Inc. (the Association), as sponsorship of the 2026 Apple and Grape Festival, was approved in the FY2025-26 Budget. Council and the Association were unable to reach agreement on the sponsorship agreement, thereby availing \$40,000 (excl GST) in the current year's budget.

This presents an opportunity to reinvest funds into initiatives that support:

- The visitor economy
- Local business capability and resilience
- Community wellbeing and participation

This report presents potential options for use of the funds.

Report

Current Funding Environment

In the 2025/26 financial year, Council received funding requests from industry associations exceeding available budget allocations. In particular:

Granite Belt Wine & Tourism and the Stanthorpe & Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce received reduced funding relative to their proposals. This has limited the scale of initiatives delivered in tourism promotion, business development and workforce activation.

At the same time, the operating environment remains challenging, with cost pressures impacting businesses, employment and broader community wellbeing.

In addition, the FY26 *Community Grants* program was fully expended at end of January 2026, thereby ceasing support for small community organisation initiatives (including small events).

Opportunities for Reallocation

Two primary categories for potential reinvestment have been identified:

1. Industry Association Initiatives

Proposals received from:

- Granite Belt Wine & Tourism (tourism activation and international market readiness)
- Stanthorpe & Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce (investment attraction, workforce and business capability)
- Warwick Chamber of Commerce (business resilience, financial capability and local activation)

These initiatives deliver a combination of:

- Economic outcomes (visitation, business growth, employment)
- Social outcomes (community participation, resilience, wellbeing and local activation)

2. Event Sponsorship Requests

Council has also received requests for support from several events over the recent months, including, but not limited to:

- National Sheep Dog Trials (Stanthorpe) – August, 2026
- Holden Nationals (Stanthorpe) – June, 2026
- Romancing the Stones (Warwick) – September, 2026

These events, pending assessment in accordance with grant guidelines, have the potential to:

- Deliver immediate economic benefit through visitation and local spend
- Provide strong social outcomes through community participation, volunteerism, cultural enrichment and regional identity

Below is more detail regarding the recommendation to allocate funding across both industry associations and event sponsorship.

Indicative allocation:

- \$10,000 to Granite Belt Wine & Tourism
- \$10,000 to Stanthorpe & Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce
- \$10,000 to Warwick Chamber of Commerce
- Remaining \$10,000 allocated to minor event sponsorship

Considerations:

- Supports a mix of tourism, business and community outcomes
- Addresses identified funding gaps in FY26
- Delivers both immediate and medium-term benefits
- Balances geographic considerations across the region
- Provides both economic return and social/community impact

Conclusion/Summary

The availability of \$40,000 presents an opportunity for Council to deliver targeted outcomes across the Southern Downs region within the current financial year.

While maintaining a focus on major events or directing funding solely to minor events are both viable options, these approaches are more narrowly focused and do not fully leverage the breadth of opportunities currently available.

A balanced allocation approach:

- Supports tourism, business capability and community activation simultaneously
- Addresses identified funding shortfalls experienced by key industry organisations
- Provides immediate economic stimulus through events, while also investing in longer-term business and industry resilience
- Delivers both economic and social outcomes, including community participation, wellbeing and local activation

The above recommendation is considered to provide the most comprehensive and equitable return on Council's investment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed allocation involves redistribution of existing budgeted funds and does not require additional budget allocation.

All funding would be disbursed within the 2025/26 financial year.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

- Potential perception of inequity in allocation, particularly given the origin of funds in the Granite Belt
- Dilution of impact where funding is distributed across multiple initiatives
- Time constraints for delivery within the current financial year
- Challenges in measuring outcomes consistently across different initiative types
- Risk of future funding expectations from recipients
- Event delivery risks (e.g. attendance, weather, external conditions)

Opportunity

- Achieve both economic and social outcomes through targeted reinvestment
- Support business resilience, employment and local economic activity
- Enhance community participation, wellbeing and town activation
- Leverage existing programs and partnerships with proven delivery capability
- Address identified funding gaps in the current financial year
- Support a diverse and active events calendar across the region
- Demonstrate Council's responsiveness to current conditions

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Consultation with Economic Development team and Festivals and Events Officer.
Councillor Information Session 8 April 2026.

External Consultation

Consultation with minor events seeking sponsorship proposals from event organisers (from which to assess should funds be available) and consultation with industry associations seeking proposals about how they would spend additional money, if available.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Nil

Corporate Plan

Goal 1 Our People

Outcome: 1.2 Communities have the opportunities to grow and develop.

Objective: 1.2.1 Plan and provide community facilities and programs to meet the needs of our diverse community and enable community growth.

Goal 3 Our Prosperity

Outcome: 3.3 The Southern Downs is a destination of choice for business and visitors.

Objective: 3.3.3 Support and work with regional partners to undertake targeted branding and marketing activities for major events.

Policy / Strategy

Grants to Community Policy (PL-CS075)

Corporate Plan 2021-2026

Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026

Southern Downs and Granite Belt Events Strategy 2025

Legal

There appears to be no legal issues associated with this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS


A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

12.3 Review of Councillor Portfolios

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Manager Governance	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council adopt the amendments to Councillor Portfolios included as Appendix A to the Councillor Portfolio Policy as presented.

REPORT

Background

At its Ordinary Meeting held on 19 April 2024, following the 2024 Local Government elections, Council adopted the Councillor Portfolio Policy PL-136, which included Appendix A outlining details of each Portfolio and the Councillor appointed to that Portfolio.

Councillors reviewed the Portfolio allocations and adopted an amended Appendix A at its Ordinary Meeting held on 16 October 2024.

A copy of the Appendix A is provided as **Attachment 1**.

Report

Councillors have undertaken a further review of those Portfolio allocations to achieve better alignment with similar areas of responsibility. The suggested allocations now align with the commitments outlined in the draft new Corporate Plan.

A copy of the revised Appendix A is provided as **Attachment 2**.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

Nil.

Opportunity

These appointments provide an opportunity for elected members to support inclusive teamwork, co-operation between elected members and the Executive Leadership Team and to provide a valuable link to the community on specific matters and strategic issues.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Elected members.

External Consultation

Nil.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

Corporate Plan

Goal 1 Our People

Outcome: 1.1 Communities trust us to engage with them and advocate on their behalf.

Objective: 1.1.2 Implement effective and genuine community consultation processes that enable participation, engagement and collaboration.

1.1.3 Build confidence in our communities by being visible, empathetic and by actively listening.

Policy / Strategy

Councillor Portfolio Policy PL-136

ATTACHMENTS

1. Appendix A Councillor Portfolio Policy 16 October 2024 [↓](#)
2. Revised Appendix A Councillor Portfolio Policy 27 May 2026 [↓](#)



Appendix A: Councillor Portfolio Policy Schedule

Councillor Portfolios

Portfolio	Portfolio Definition	Portfolio Holder
Vibrant communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Governance Regional Advocacy Intergovernmental Relations 	Mayor
Liveable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Visitor Information Centres Parks and gardens (including cemeteries), active recreation areas and trails 	Sheryl Windle
Connected communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads and transport Footpaths, cycleways 	Ross Bartley
Resilient communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster planning and response Disaster community recovery Disability support services 	Cynthia McDonald
Secure communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Planning and Development Urban Design Frameworks and Major events 	Joel Richters
Productive communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture Water Saleyards Biosecurity and pest management 	Carla Pidgeon
Healthy communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wastewater Resource Recovery and waste management Circular economy Natural environment, climate and sustainability Mental health 	Sarah Deane
Active communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance DFV awareness Community halls and progress associations Sporting groups and associated facilities Camping facilities 	Russell Wantling
Inspired communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth projects Education Art Galleries, Libraries and Museums Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities Civic Events 	Morwenna Harslett

APPENDIX A

COUNCILLOR PORTFOLIO POLICY SCHEDULE


Councillor Portfolios as adopted on [date]

Directorate	Strategy, Growth & Stakeholder Engagement		Corporate	Infrastructure, Assets & Projects		Communities, Planning & Environmental Services			
Corporate Plan commitment	Relationships	Strong Local Economy	Responsible Management	Reliable Everyday Infrastructure & Services		Liveable Communities			
Councillor	Cr Hamilton	Cr Richters	Cr Wantling	Cr Windle	Cr Harslett	Cr Pidgeon	Cr McDonald	Cr Deane	Cr Bartley
Portfolio	Prosperous communities	Thriving communities	Active communities	Liveable communities	Connected communities	Inspired communities	Productive communities	Healthy communities	Growing communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy • Government Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development • Tourism • Major events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leasing to community organisations • Sporting groups • Camping facilities • Community halls and progress associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Council Water and Wastewater Infrastructure • Parks and recreation areas • Cemeteries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads and transport • Footpaths and cycleways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries and art galleries • Arts and culture • Civic / community events • Youth council • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biosecurity and pest management • Agriculture and horticulture • Paddock to plate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste / circular economy • Natural environment • DFV awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime ag land • Right to farm

13. CORPORATE SERVICES REPORTS

13.1 Financial Services - Financial Report as at 30 April 2026

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Management Accountant	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council receive and note the Financial Performance Report as at 30 April 2026.

REPORT

Background

The Finance Team have prepared the Financial Performance Report for April 2026.

Report

Income Statement

Revenue

YTD operational revenue of \$115.4M is \$7.6M more than budget with the following increases:

- Grants & Subsidies are currently \$1.7M more than budget due to the receipt of emergency funding not originally budgeted and the timing of the receipt of grants.
- \$1.2M in additional road maintenance (RMPC) works undertaken on behalf of Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR). This is an increase in revenue due to the volume and type of work required by TMR under this contract.
- \$1.3M increase in fees and charges due to additional \$0.2M in waste disposal fees, \$0.3M in application fees and \$0.27M increase in saleyards revenue.
- \$0.7M in interest revenue due to a larger cash balance than originally budgeted.
- The balance of \$2.7M is comprised of small items.

Expenses

YTD operating expenses of \$100.9M reflect a \$7.3M unfavorable variance, driven by a combination of timing differences and updated cost forecasts. The key increases in expenses are:

- \$3.7M in Material and Services because of additional work undertaken for TMR and works related to unbudgeted emergency work. These costs have been funded by either TMR or grants. Invoices for these works will be sent out in due course.
- Higher employee expenses resulted from several factors, including higher-than-anticipated enterprise bargaining increases, greater than anticipated road maintenance works undertaken on behalf of, and funded by TMR. These figures are reflected in the 2026 Forecast.

- \$0.5M in additional internal Plant Hire Charges due to the inclusion of additional costs not previously budgeted for under internal plant hire.

Capital Grants, Contributions and Donations

Revenue from capital grants is \$1.6M more than budget due to property being donated to Council (contributed asset) as part of development obligations.

Balance Sheet

Cash and Loans

As at 30 April 2026, Council had \$87.4M in cash at bank and investments. The total of outstanding loans, both the current and non-current, is \$8.8M, this is \$6.2M less than budget due to the assumption at the time the budget was approved that Council would draw down the entire \$4M loan immediately to fund the WIRAC Roof Replacement Works.

Capital Works in Progress

Capital works expenditure as at 30 April 2026 was \$39.1M which is 56.0% of the approved capital works budget of \$69.8M. There is a further \$17.3M in committed costs, meaning \$56.3M has been spent or committed, representing 80.8% of the adopted budget. In comparison to last year, at this stage Council had spent or committed 57.4% of the budget.

Financial Sustainability Ratios

The financial sustainability ratios are measures designed to assess the financial capacity, operating performance, liquidity, asset management and debt servicing capacity of Council. They are designed to provide a comprehensive view of the financial sustainability of the council and to support its long-term viability. During the year the ratios are presented at a single point in time, the annual report shows these as a five-year annual average to show how Council is travelling in the longer term.

As at 30 April 2026, Council was meeting or exceeding the targets as set by the Department of Local Government.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

Finance Team is monitoring movement in interest rates closely as changes can impact Council's interest revenue. Similarly, staff are currently undertaking and planning for future asset revaluation and indexation for Transport and Storm Water assets as per the Audit and Risk Committee Position Paper dated 26 June 2025.

There is an emerging risk concerning the impact of higher diesel prices and supply affecting Council's budget and operations. At this stage the diesel actual spend is \$176K over Council's diesel budget year to date. Council will continue monitoring the situation and will determine what actions need to be taken as needed.

The unleaded fuel spend is not affected at this stage.

Opportunity

Finance continues to work with the General Manager of Infrastructure, Assets and Projects, Manager of Assets, Spatial and Projects and the relevant project managers on project variances and milestone alignment in project delivery to improve cash flow forecasting and monthly reporting.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Nil.

External Consultation

Nil.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Local Government Act 2009 and Local Government Regulation 2012

Corporate Plan

Goal 4 Our Performance

Outcome: 4.4 Council has embedded risk management, good governance, transparency and accountability into what we do.

Objective: 4.4.2 Ensure our long-term financial sustainability is a pillar of our decision making.
 4.4.3 Our asset management is smart, effective and efficient with robust project selection pathways.

Policy / Strategy

Operational Plan 2025/26

Legal

There appears to be no legal issues associated with this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS

A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Monthly Finance Report April 2026 [↓](#)



Southern Downs
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Performance Report

April 2026

Southern Downs Regional Council Income Statement April 2026

	Phased 2026 YTD Actual \$	Phased 2026 YTD Budget \$	YTD Variance \$	YTD Variance %	Note	Annual 2026 Budget \$	Annual 2026 Forecast \$
Revenue from ordinary activities							
General Rates	45,515,065	45,106,383	408,682	0.9%		45,105,550	45,515,065
Rural fire brigade levy	285,211	283,570	1,641	0.6%		283,570	283,570
Utility Rates and Charges	37,023,303	36,564,838	458,465	1.3%		36,564,838	37,023,303
Less Discounts	(2,655,633)	(2,665,171)	9,538	(0.4%)		(2,665,171)	(2,665,171)
Rates on Council properties	(857,587)	(880,294)	22,706	(2.6%)		(880,294)	(880,294)
	79,310,359	78,409,327	901,032	1.15%		78,408,493	79,276,473
Fees and Charges	8,821,355	7,524,154	1,297,201	17.2%	1	8,817,955	9,132,515
Interest	3,659,339	2,934,485	724,854	24.7%	2	3,531,824	4,131,824
Contract & Sales Revenue	2,280,564	1,033,086	1,247,478	120.8%	3	2,264,716	3,555,642
Rent and Other Income	1,096,499	1,109,594	(13,095)	(1.2%)		1,320,766	1,521,866
Government Grants and Subsidies	7,976,103	6,317,049	1,659,053	26.3%	4	11,595,126	12,991,390
Internal Revenue	12,235,757	10,466,957	1,768,800	16.9%		12,560,348	12,560,348
Total Operating Revenue	115,379,975	107,794,651	7,585,324	7.0%		118,499,229	123,170,058
Expenses from ordinary activities							
Employee Costs	29,258,036	27,229,916	2,028,120	7.4%	5	32,126,684	34,736,677
Materials and Services	39,589,755	35,890,716	3,699,039	10.3%	6	47,852,158	48,820,335
Depreciation and Amortisation	21,691,540	20,732,755	958,785	4.6%	7	26,643,546	26,643,546
Plant Hire	4,773,615	4,286,790	486,824	11.4%	8	5,078,440	5,078,440
Finance Costs	583,713	504,926	78,788	15.6%		863,319	837,605
Internal Charges	4,984,945	4,984,923	22	0.0%		5,981,908	5,981,908
Total Operating Expenses	100,881,604	93,630,026	7,251,578	7.7%		118,546,055	122,098,511
Operating Surplus/(Deficit) before capital items	14,498,372	14,164,625	333,747	2.36%		(46,827)	1,071,547
Other Capital Amounts							
Capital Grants, Contributions and Donations	12,856,850	11,252,049	1,604,801	14.3%	9	14,029,433	14,029,433
Other capital income and (expenses)	(713,754)	922,500	(1,636,254)	(177.4%)	10	(4,271,000)	(4,271,000)
Net Result Surplus/(Deficit)	26,641,468	26,339,174	302,294	1.1%		9,711,606	10,829,980

note 1: Fees and Charges above budget due to Waste Disposal Fees \$207K, Application Fees \$317K and Cattle Sales Fees \$268K

note 2: Interest earned higher than budgeted due to cash rate increases with RBA, and good investment opportunities with banks

note 3: Recoverable Works higher than budgeted due to receipt of RMPC funding not aligning with budget phasing and additional works completed

note 4: Grants and Subsidies higher than budget due to grants receipt of Emergency Funding not in current budget, and Waste Grants received earlier than budgeted

note 5: Higher employee expenses resulted from several factors, including, higher-than-anticipated enterprise bargaining increases. These figures have been reconciled and are fully reflected in the 2026 Forecast

note 6: Materials and Services over budget mainly under Infrastructure, due to repair works of flood damage being categorised as operational

note 7: Depreciation higher than budget due to upgrade of new plant being depreciated, replacing old equipment previously fully expensed

note 8: Internal Plant Hire charges review resulted in an increase, due to ensuring all plant items are charged plant hire fees

note 9: Capital Grants currently above budget due to donated assets not accounted for in budget

note 10: Other Capital Income and (expenses) under budget due to disposal of fleet

Southern Downs Regional Council Balance Sheet

April 2026

	Phased 2026 YTD Actual \$	Annual 2026 Budget \$	YTD Variance \$	YTD Variance %
Current Assets				
Cash assets & Investments	87,432,433	87,589,000	(156,567)	(0.2%)
Receivables	8,129,083	11,872,000	(3,742,917)	(31.5%)
Assets held for sale	-	160,000	(160,000)	(100.0%)
Inventories	1,275,095	1,138,000	137,095	12.0%
	96,836,610	100,759,000	(3,922,390)	-3.9%
Non-Current Assets				
Investment Property	363,900	364,000	(100)	(0.0%)
Property, plant and equipment	1,000,231,396	1,027,804,000	(27,572,604)	(2.7%)
Other Financial Assets	121,758	136,000	(14,242)	(10.5%)
Capital works in progress	49,370,099	15,000,000	34,370,099	229.1%
Intangible Assets	68,596	88,000	(19,404)	(22.1%)
	1,050,155,749	1,043,392,000	6,763,749	0.6%
TOTAL ASSETS	1,146,992,359	1,144,151,000	2,841,359	0.2%
Current Liabilities				
Creditors and other payables	7,968,376	15,318,000	(7,349,624)	(48.0%)
Provisions	9,043,671	9,119,000	(75,329)	(0.8%)
Interest bearing liabilities	2,098,379	2,367,000	(268,621)	(11.3%)
	19,110,425	26,804,000	(7,693,575)	(28.7%)
Non-Current Liabilities				
Interest bearing liabilities	6,716,442	12,615,000	(5,898,558)	(46.8%)
Provisions	15,489,309	15,155,000	334,309	2.2%
Other Payables	1,680,467	1,671,000	9,467	0.6%
	23,886,218	29,441,000	(5,554,782)	(18.9%)
TOTAL LIABILITIES	42,996,643	56,245,000	(13,248,357)	(23.6%)
NET COMMUNITY ASSETS	1,103,995,716	1,087,906,000	16,089,716	1.5%
Community Equity				
Asset Revaluation Reserve	382,365,600	377,790,000	4,575,600	1.2%
Retained surplus	721,630,116	710,116,000	11,514,116	1.6%
TOTAL COMMUNITY EQUITY	1,103,995,716	1,087,906,000	16,089,716	1.5%

Southern Downs Regional Council Cash Flow Statement

April 2026

	Phased 2026 YTD Actual \$	Phased 2026 YTD Budget \$	YTD Variance \$	YTD Variance %	Annual 2026 Budget \$	Forecast 2026 Budget \$
Cashflows from operating activities						
Receipts from customers	100,493,911	87,459,411	13,034,500	14.9%	90,268,000	99,831,667
Payments to suppliers and employees	(89,017,158)	(71,099,632)	(17,917,526)	25.2%	(82,769,000)	(91,881,544)
Investment and interest revenue received	4,331,899	2,934,485	1,397,414	47.6%	3,531,000	4,131,824
Rental Income	605,776	477,579	128,197	26.8%	632,000	632,000
Non-capital grants and contributions	7,976,102	6,317,049	1,659,052	26.3%	11,495,000	12,991,390
Borrowing costs	-	-	-	0.0%	(576,000)	(576,000)
Other cashflows from operating activities	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-
Net Cash Operating Activities	24,390,529	26,088,892	(1,698,363)	140.8%	22,581,000	25,129,337
Cashflows from Investing Activities						
Sale of property, plant and equipment	490,723	1,339,167	(848,444)	(63.4%)	1,607,000	1,607,000
Grants, subsidies, contributions and donations	11,801,193	11,252,049	549,144	4.9%	14,183,000	14,183,000
Net investment maturities	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(39,073,328)	(36,390,000)	(2,683,328)	7.4%	(43,668,000)	(63,000,000)
Other cashflows from investing activities	-	-	-	0.0%	128,000	128,000
Net Cash Investing Activities	(26,781,412)	(23,798,784)	(2,982,628)	(51.1%)	(27,750,000)	(47,082,000)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities						
Proceeds from/repayment of borrowings and advances	(1,544,212)	3,359,250	(4,903,462)	(146.0%)	4,479,000	(1,574,995)
Net Cash Financing Activities	(1,544,212)	3,359,250	(4,903,462)	(146.0%)	4,479,000	(1,574,995)
Net increase in cash and cash and equivalent held	(3,935,095)	5,649,358	(9,584,453)	(169.7%)	(690,000)	(23,527,658)
Cash at beginning of period	91,367,528	63,816,000	27,551,528	43.2%	91,367,528	88,279,104
Cash at end of period	87,432,433	69,465,358	17,967,075	25.9%	90,677,528	64,751,446

Note: The annual forecasted cash at end of period now includes total capital expenditure (current and carry-over), correcting the previous cash balance which included only current-year capital expenditure.

Southern Downs Regional Council Sustainability Ratios April 2026

	Key Ratios	Calculation	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Target Ratio	On Target?	Overview
Financial Capacity	Council Controlled Revenue Ratio	((Net Rates, Levies and Charges + Fees and Charges) / Total Operating Revenue) (%)	82.50%	86.28%	N/A	✓	Council-controlled revenue is an indicator of a Council's financial flexibility, ability to influence its operating income, and capacity to respond to unexpected financial shocks.
	Population Growth Ratio	(Prior year estimated population / previous year estimated population) - 1	0.60%	0.28%	N/A	✓	Population growth is a key driver to a Council's operating income, service needs, and infrastructure requirements into the future.
Operating Performance	Operating Surplus Ratio	(Net Operating Surplus / Total Operating Revenue) (%)	(0.04%)	23.1%	> 0%	✓	The operating surplus ratio is an indicator of the extent to which operating revenues raised cover operational expenses only or are available for capital funding purposes.
	Operating Cash Ratio	(Net Operating Surplus + Depreciation + Finance Costs) / Total Operating Revenue (%)	25.70%	31.9%	> 0%	✓	The operating cash ratio indicates that a Council is generating surplus cash from its core operations, which suggests that Council has the ability to self-fund its capital expenditure requirements.
Liquidity	Unrestricted Cash Expense Cover Ratio	(Total Cash and Equivalents + Current Investments + Available Ongoing QTC Working Capital Facility Limit - Externally Restricted Cash) / Total Operating Expenditure - Depreciation and Amortisation - Finance Costs) x 12	7	13	Greater than 4 months	✓	The unrestricted cash expense cover ratio is an indicator of the unconstrained liquidity available to a Council to meet ongoing and emergent financial demands, which is a key component to solvency. It represents the number of months a Council can continue operating based on currently monthly expenses.
Asset Management	Asset Sustainability Ratio	(Capital Expenditure on the Replacement of Assets (renewals) / Depreciation Expense)	105.7%	99.0%	> 80%	✓	This is an approximation of the extent to which the infrastructure assets managed by the Council are being replaced as these reach the end of their useful lives.
	Asset Consumption Ratio	Written Down Replacement Cost of Depreciable Infrastructure Assets / Current Replacement Cost of Depreciable Infrastructure Assets	65.2%	62.7%	> 60%	✓	The asset consumption ratio approximates the extent to which Council's infrastructure assets have been consumed compared to what it would cost to build a new asset with the same benefit to the community.
	Asset Renewal Funding Ratio	Total of Planned Capital Expenditure on Infrastructure Asset Renewals over 10 Years / Total Required Capital Expenditure on Infrastructure Asset Renewals over 10 Years	99.9%	N/A	N/A	✓	The asset renewal funding ratio measures the ability of a Council to fund its projected infrastructure asset renewal/replacement in the future.
Debt Servicing Capacity	Debt Leverage Ratio	(Book Value of Debt / (Total Operating Revenue - Total Operating Expenditure + Depreciation and Amortisation))	0.56	0.24	Tier 4 = 0 - 3 times	✓	This is an indicator of Council's ability to repay its existing debt. It measures the relative size of the Council's debt to its operating performance.

Comments on Ratio Results

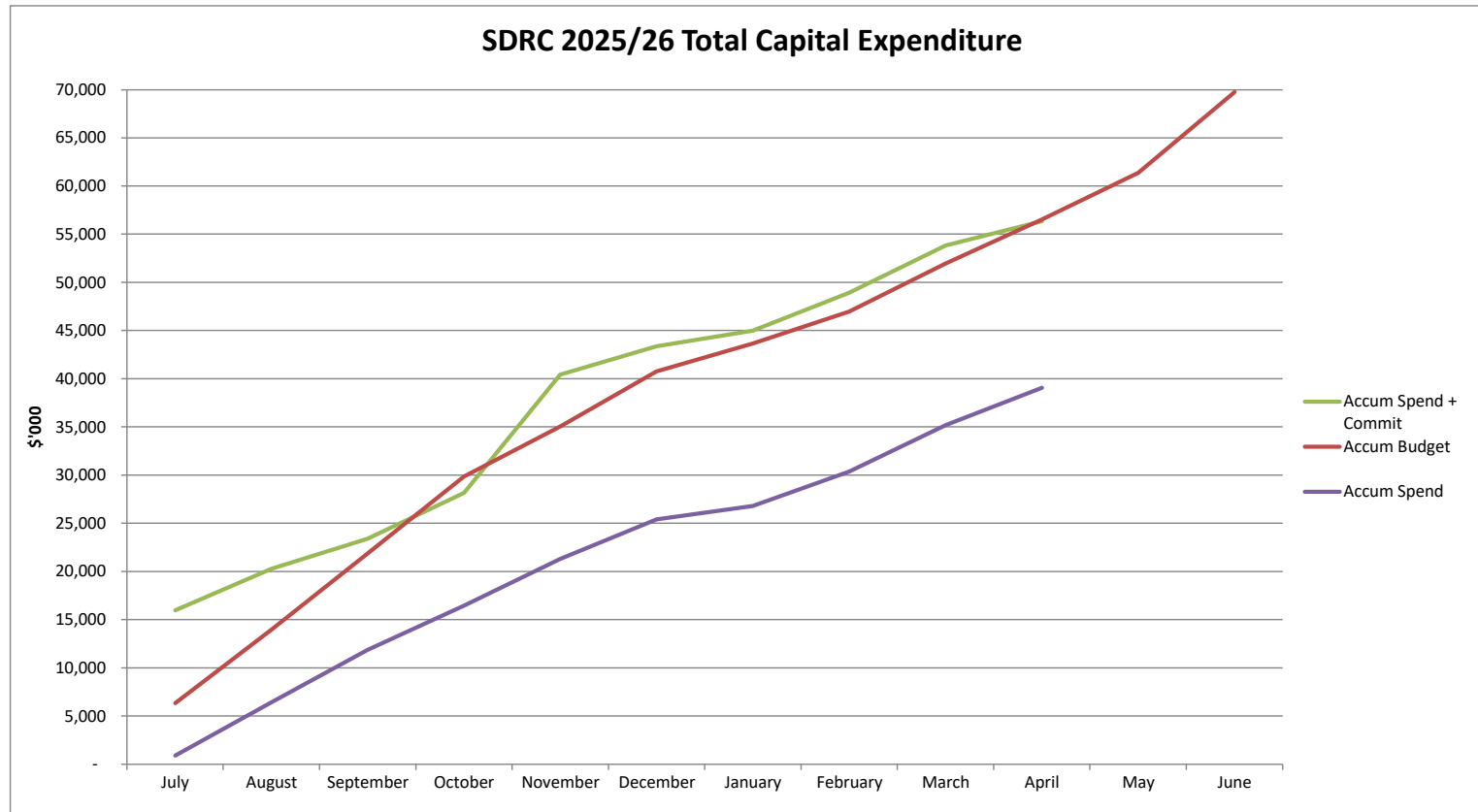
When looking at ratios it is important to understand that they represent a snapshot in time and some ratios are more annualised targets.

* Operating Surplus Ratio: The ratio is currently above target range implying increased surplus from either additional revenue or lower costs. This ratio is expected to bounce around during the year especially in Q1 to Q3 due to timing of both revenue and expenditure during the year. Currently still on target to meet the budget target which sits below the range.

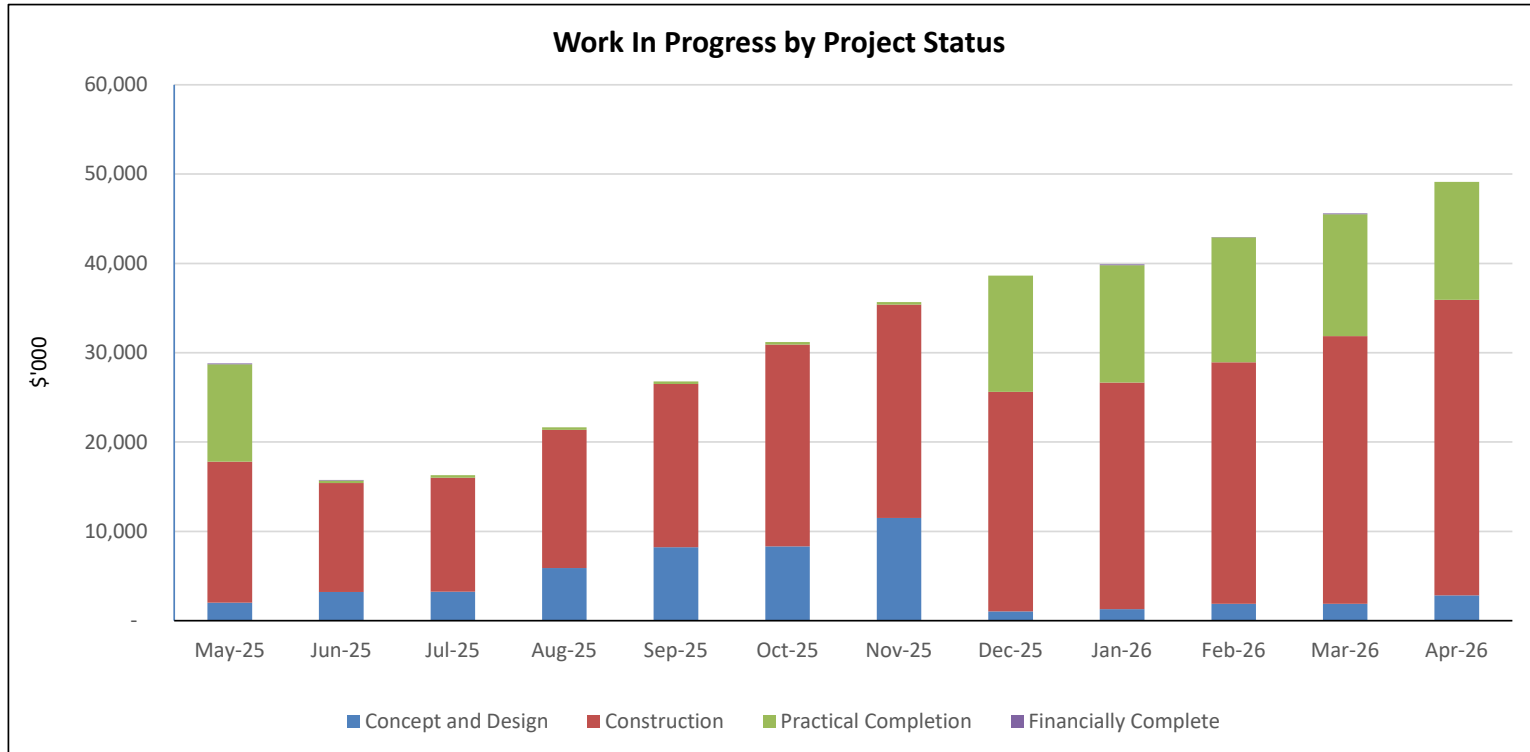
Southern Downs Regional Council
Capital Works Projects by Asset Class
 As At 30 April 2026

	Budget	YTD Expenditure	% Spent	Committed	Spent and Committed	% Spent and Committed
Land	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buildings	4,189,910	2,196,620	52.4%	802,788	2,999,408	71.6%
Plant & Equipment	8,803,097	3,104,612	35.3%	4,675,662	7,780,274	88.4%
Roads, Drains & Bridges	24,331,341	17,424,115	71.6%	3,391,276	20,815,391	85.5%
Water	12,368,022	5,320,337	43.0%	2,657,517	7,977,854	64.5%
Sewerage	7,718,918	1,654,638	21.4%	4,595,745	6,250,383	81.0%
Other Assets	12,357,040	9,373,006	75.9%	1,152,410	10,525,416	85.2%
Total	69,768,328	39,073,328	56.0%	17,275,397	56,348,725	80.8%

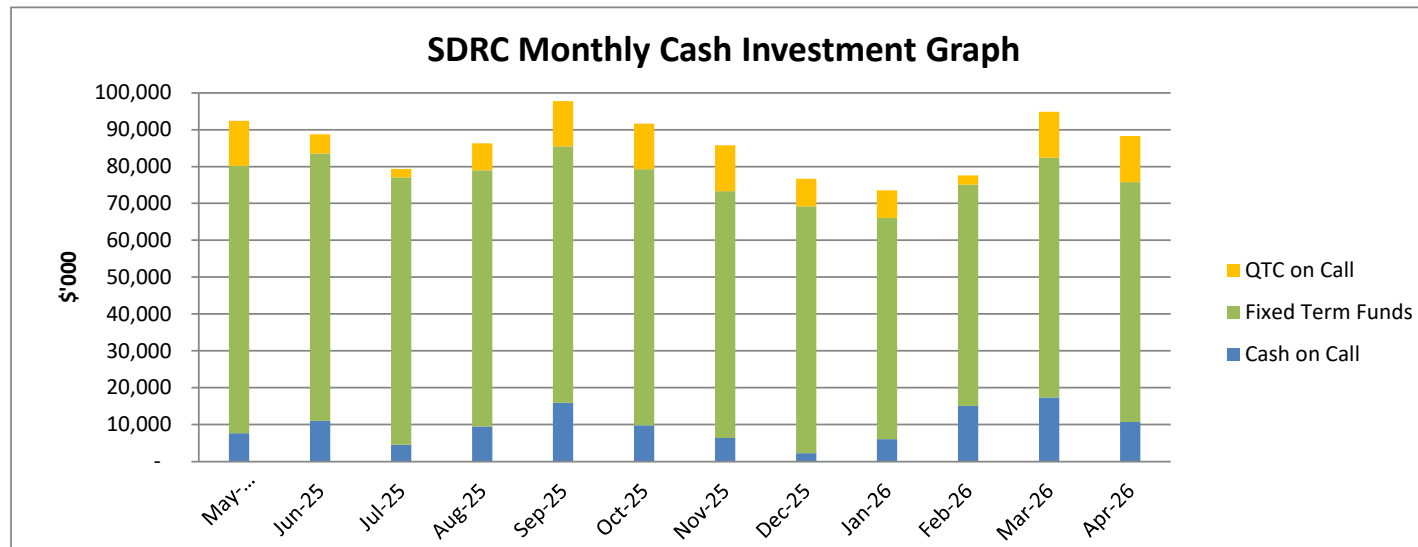
Southern Downs Regional Council
Capital Expenditure
As At 30 April 2026



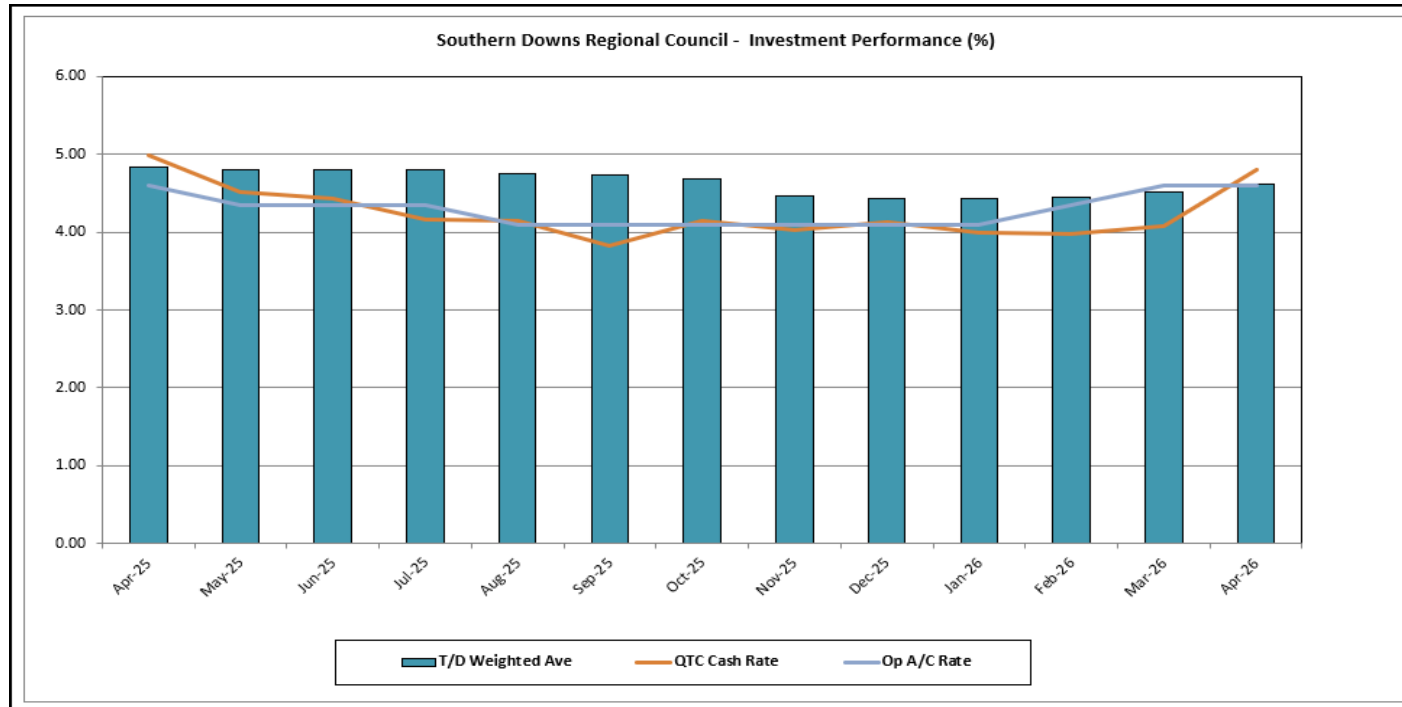
**Southern Downs Regional Council
 Work in Progress (WIP) Status Report
 As At 30 April 2026**



**Southern Downs Regional Council
 Total Monthly Cash Investment Register
 As At 30 April 2026**



Southern Downs Regional Council
Investment Performance
As At 30 April 2026




**Southern Downs Regional Council
Borrowings Report
As At 30 April 2026**

QTC Loan Account	Balance	Payout Date
CBD Redevelopment Stage 2	252,989	Mar-28
Market Square Pump Station	118,061	Mar-28
General	854,329	Mar-28
General 2009	404,543	Mar-28
General 2009/10	61,477	Mar-28
General 2010/11	927,828	Mar-28
General 2011/12	2,268,627	Jun-32
General 2012/13	1,324,235	Dec-32
Warwick Sewerage Treatment Plant	38,251	Jun-26
Allora Water Main	2,564,481	Mar-34
Total Loan Balance	<u>8,814,821</u>	

13.2 Review of Status of Temporary Road Closure and associated Road Licence - part of Murphys Crossing Road, Nundubbermere

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Manager Governance	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council, pursuant to Section 99(1) of the *Land Act 1994*, advise the Department of Resources that Council does not support the request to cancel the temporary road closure and re-open this section of the currently closed road reserve, described as being part of Murphy's Crossing Road, and that runs through, or adjacent to Lot 14 on BNT 36, Lot 91 on BNT 538, Lot 10 on BNT 313 and State land Lot 92 on BNT 538.

REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assist Council to decide whether to support a request from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development (**the Department**) for Council's views or requirements regarding a request to cancel the temporary road closure, and reopening, of a section of Murphys Crossing Road that has been temporarily closed by the State of Queensland.

Background

The part of Murphy's Crossing Road under discussion is the road reserve that is adjacent to, or passes through, Lot 14 on BNT 36, Lot 91 on BNT 538, Lot 10 on BNT 313 and State land Lot 92 on BNT 538 shown in Figure 1, below and expanded in Attachment 1 (**the Temporary Road Closure**).

Tartini Pty Ltd owns or occupies, as lessee, the lots through which, or adjacent to, the road reserve subject to the Temporary Road Closure passes. A copy of the current company search for Tartini Pty Ltd is Attachment 2.

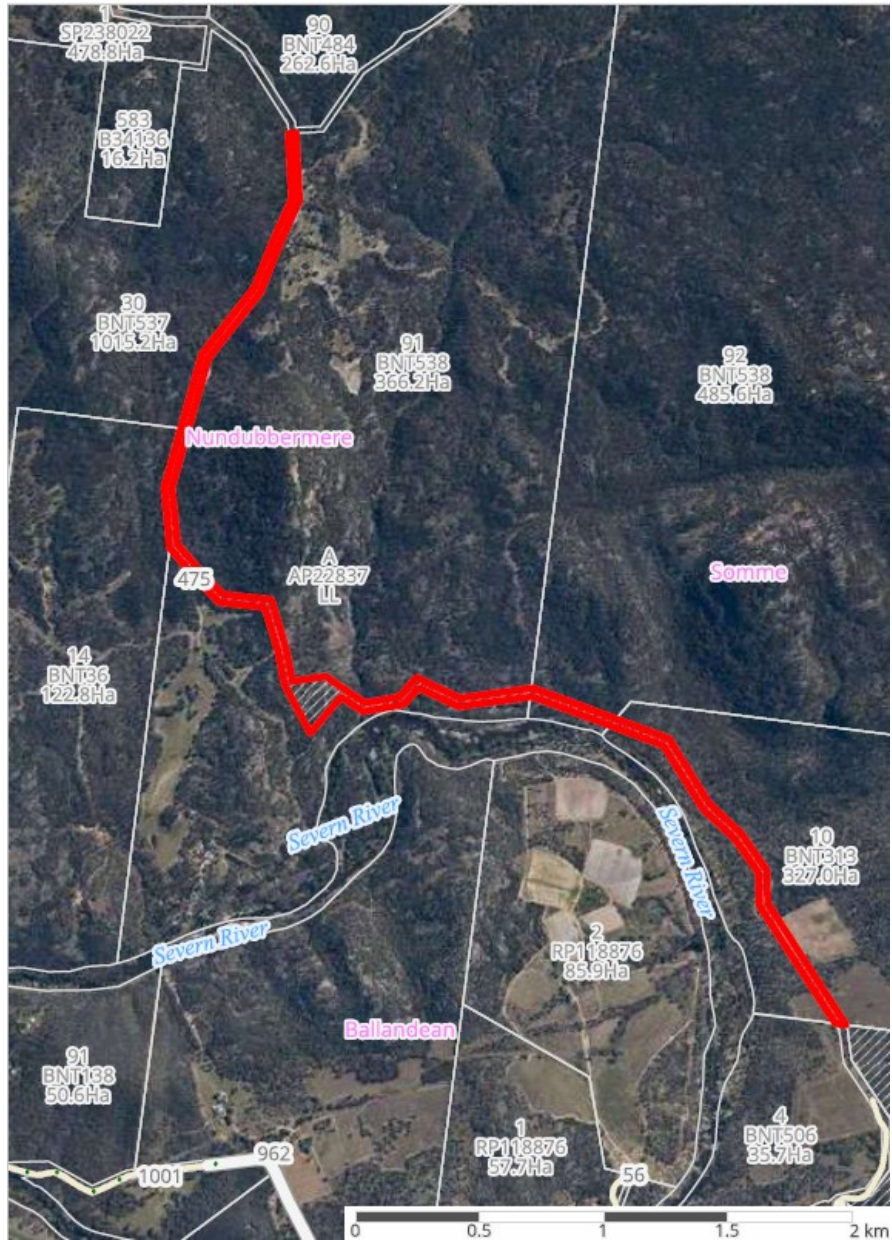


Figure 1 Temporary Road Closure, Nundubbermere & Somme

On 10 November 2021, Council considered a request from the Department for Council's views and requirements for the Temporary Road Closure. Council resolved that it had no objection to the Temporary Road Closure. The Temporary Road Closure and associated Road Licence over Murphys Crossing Road were granted in favour of Tartini Pty Ltd by the Department on 7 December 2023.

Council has received a further request from the Department seeking Council's views in relation to a request they have received to cancel the Temporary Road Closure and associated Road Licence and reopen the road reserve.

Report

The *Land Act 1994* empowers the Minister to close a road, either permanently or temporarily. The closure of a road requires the Minister to consider it appropriate to do so, after making inquiries and giving notice, and having satisfied themselves that the road is no longer needed.

A temporary road closure is effected by issuing a road licence over the road. The road licence can be revoked or cancelled by the Minister, who retains the executive discretion to cancel the road licence. There are no express legislative restrictions on, or requirements for the Minister's discretion to cancel a road licence. It is reasonable to assume the Minister will consider the same factors as when deciding to close the road, such as the continued need for the road, statutory compliance, protection of public interest and whether the licence holder has complied with any conditions.

Submissions to Council

Council has received written and verbal submissions from parties both in favour of, and opposing, the cancellation of the road licence, and reopening of the road reserve. The following documents are attached for Councillors to consider:

- Submission from Adventure access, attachment 3.
- Bundle of emails from residents, Attachment 4.
- Letter from Tartini Pty Ltd, Attachment 5.

Councillors can read the submissions in full however the main arguments are summarised below:

For Reopening	Against Reopening
Major route connecting Ballandean (Bents Road) and Pikedale (Nundubbermere Road)	Murphys Crossing Road terminates at the northern bank of the Severn River. South of the Severn River the constructed gravel road is on private property
Scenic route providing safe and convenient access for motorcyclists, bicyclists, pedestrians, horses and 4x4 traffic	The dirt track on the reserve is unmaintained, in poor condition and has become impassable in sections due to washouts. At the most dangerous or impassable sections, tracks have been made on private property. The road would need to be remade on the reserve
Popular route for recreational travelers	There is no access from Murphys Crossing Road reserve to the Severn River so people used the road to illegally trespass on private property, illegally dump rubbish, camp, hoon and illegally hunt & fish
Restricts access to emergency services vehicles	Emergency services have access as all gates have emergency services locks. The southern access is through a gate off Bents Road and not through Murphys Creek Road

Officer Investigations & Commentary

Rural Fire Brigade Access

Officers contacted both the Ballandean and Mallow Rural Fire Captains to determine whether they had any access or other concerns regarding the Temporary Road Closure. Officers were informed that the Rural Fire Service has been given access to the land with the fire service having keys to specific locks on the gates.

One of the Fire Captains noted that originally he was not in favour of the temporary closure but observed that since the closure he has not been impacted in any way and can see no reason to reopen the road reserve.

Queensland Police

Officers contacted the Officer in Charge of each of the Wallangarra and Stanthorpe Police Stations. One of the officers noted that if he considered there was a net benefit to the community, he would support the reopening, but given its limited benefit to the community, he is not supportive. Both confirmed or noted as follows:

- Police had keys to access the gates if required.
- The road reserve is in poor condition and is essentially impassable except for specialised vehicles such as adventure 4WD or adventure motorcycles.
- Non-specialised off-road vehicles would not be able to travel the length of the road reserve.
- Prior to the closure, police were required to attend the property to respond to antisocial and unlawful behaviour and to respond to vehicle rollovers and accidents, including attendance at a fatality.
- Post the closure, the incidence of police callout is almost zero.

Independent Legal Advice

Officers obtained independent legal advice, the contents of which remain confidential to Council. A copy of the letter of advice is confidential Attachment 6.

Status of Murphys Crossing Road south of the Severn River

There is no road reserve between Bents Road and the Severn River aligned with Murphys Crossing Road. Figure 2 below shows that the road reserve terminates at the northern bank of the Severn River, and the formed gravel road runs from Bents Road through two private parcels of land before crossing the Severn River and aligning with the Murphys Crossing Road Reserve.

A road is an area of land that is dedicated to public use as a road. Typically, dedication is formal and a reservation is created. A dedication can also arise where an area of land that is developed for, or has as one of its main uses, the driving or riding of motor vehicles and is open to, or used by, the public.

This would appear to be the case for the section of Murphys Crossing Road between Bents Road and the Severn River.



Figure 2 Aerial view of constructed track between Bents Road and the Severn River

Condition of Murphys Crossing Road Reserve

Commentary from Police and Rural Fire tend to support the comments from Tartini Pty Ltd that the condition of the road reserve is effectively impassable to normal traffic. Tartini Pty Ltd note that they have constructed a network of access tracks within their land, as is within their right, and sometimes their access tracks utilise sections of the road reserve, but often they do not.

If the road reserve is reopened, it would seem likely that the tracks within the road reserve would be in poor, if not impassable condition. There is no obligation for Tartini Pty Ltd to allow the public to use their internal tracks on their private property.

Council bears no responsibility for maintenance of roads beyond its constructed road network nor any obligation to extend its constructed road network to provide access to properties that are not serviced by the constructed road network.

Requests for construction of roads are treated in the same manner as any capital works submission, an exhaustive process considering multiple factors to utilise a limited amount of funds. Council's Roads Asset and Service Management Master Plan/TAMP explains that budget limitations generally require Council to prioritise higher order roads with higher traffic volumes.

If the Road Closure was cancelled, officers do not consider it likely that traffic volumes associated with typical use would warrant the construction of a formed road. If traffic demand increases, Officers consider the likely cost to construct a road, even a lower order gravel road, along the road reserve would be cost prohibitive noting the steep rock features within parts of the road reserve.

If officer's conclusions regarding the poor condition of the road reserve are accepted, it follows that the road reserve does not represent a safe, convenient connection between Ballandean (Bents Road) and Pikedale (Nundubbermere Road).

Noting the road has been closed since December 2023, and considering comments from police and rural fire officers, officers consider that there is limited demand for, or benefit to the community from, the road reserve.

Conclusion/Summary

Council is requested to advise whether it has a view regarding cancelling the Temporary Road Closure and Road Licence and reopening the road reserve. Council has received deputations and correspondence from various parties, both in favour of and opposing the request to cancel the road licence and reopen the road reserve.

The road reserve does not contain a constructed, or formed, road and was not maintained by Council. The road reserve is likely to be in poor condition and impassable except for experienced off-road drivers operating specialised vehicles.

Emergency services have confirmed they have sufficient access to and through the land and do not require Murphys Crossing Road reserve to be reopened.

Officers do not support the request to cancel the Temporary Road Closure and Road Licence and reopen the road.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this request as it would be decided by the Minister pursuant to the *Land Act 1994*.

If the road is reopened, there will be financial implications associated with Council's obligation to manage the road. This would likely include assessing the safety of the road reserve and may include advisory or other signage.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

If the road is reopened, Council will assume responsibility for the management of the road, which includes a level of legal liability for the road. This would need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis and is subject to the liability shield provisions of the *Civil Liability Act 2003*.

The application is decided by the Minister under the *Land Act 1994*.

Opportunity

This gives the chance to Council to utilise this road reserve.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Presented at Councillor Information Session on 11 February 2026 and 6 May 2026.

External Consultation

Council received a deputation from residents during Councillor Information Session on 11 February 2026 in addition to a number of letters supporting the reopening of the road reserve.

Council received a further deputation from two of the Directors of Tartini Pty Ltd on 20 May 2026.

Officers have spoken with the Officer in Charge of both Stanthorpe and Wallangarra Police as well as the Fire Captains of each of the Ballandean and Mallow Rural Fire Services.

The Department of Resources is the decision-maker for the application. Council is deemed a party given Council's role as road manager and is not required to consult with landowners.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Council controls all roads in its local government area pursuant to section 60 of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

The application to permanently close a road is decided by the Minister pursuant to section 99(1) of the *Land Act 1994*. Only adjoining landowners or public utility providers can apply to permanently close a road.

Corporate Plan

Goal 3 Our Prosperity

Outcome: 3.3 The Southern Downs is a destination of choice for business and visitors.

Objective: 3.3.1 Establish a reputation for working collaboratively with developers to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes.

Goal 4 Our Performance

Outcome: 4.1 Our customers want to do business with us.

Objective: 4.1.1 Deliver contemporary customer service experiences that align with the expectations of our customers and the community

Policy / Strategy

Use of Roads Policy (PL-IS110)

Legal

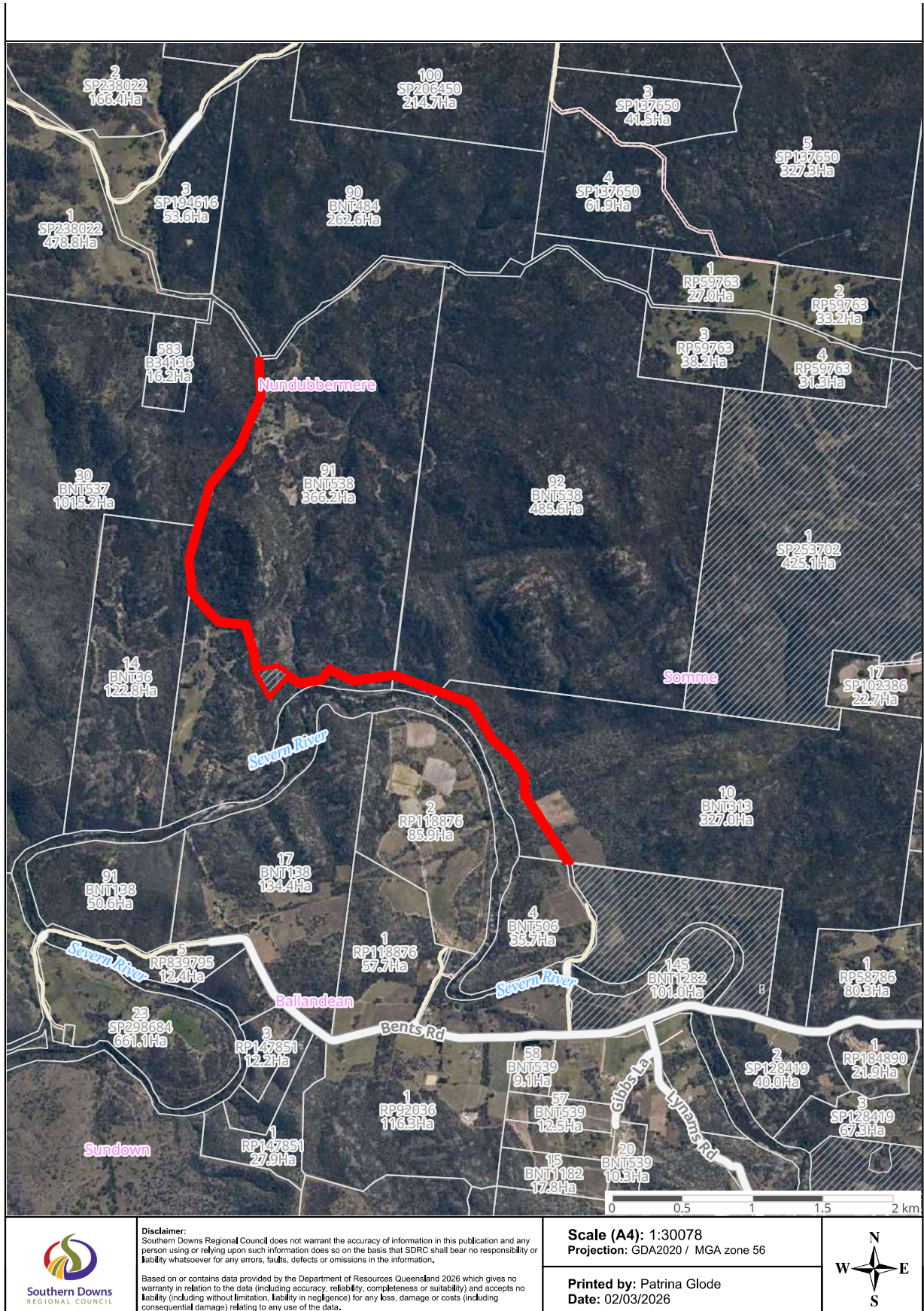
There appears to be no legal issues associated with this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS

A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken. In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the Human Rights Policy PL-CS093 and the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019. It is considered that the subject matter does not conflict with any human rights issues and supports the fundamental rights listed in Councils Human Rights Policy PL-CS093.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1 overhead map [↓](#)
2. Attachment 2 Current Company Extract Tartini Pty Ltd (Confidential - Provided to Councillors only)
3. Attachment 3 Submission from Adventure Access received 29 January 2026 [↓](#)
4. Attachment 4 Bundle of emails from residents (Confidential - Provided to Councillors only)
5. Attachment 5 Submission from Tartini Pty Ltd (Confidential - Provided to Councillors only)
6. Attachment 6 Advice to Council (Confidential - Provided to Councillors only)



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 Southern Downs Regional Council does not warrant the accuracy of information in this publication and any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that SDRC shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

Based on or contains data provided by the Department of Resources Queensland 2026 which gives no warranty in relation to the data (including accuracy, reliability, completeness or suitability) and accepts no liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for any loss, damage or costs (including consequential damage) relating to any use of the data.

Scale (A4): 1:30078
Projection: GDA2020 / MGA zone 56

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Date: 02/03/2026



ADMINISTRATIVE LAW CHALLENGE TO TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE

Murphy's Crossing Road, Somme, Queensland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission challenges the Minister's decision (or delegate's decision) to issue a road licence under section 103 of the *Land Act 1994* (Qld) that temporarily closes part of Murphy's Crossing Road, Somme. The road has now been closed for **three years** (since approximately February 2024, or potentially earlier based on advocacy group reports). The decision constitutes reviewable error on multiple grounds including failure to properly balance competing interests as mandated by departmental policy, taking irrelevant considerations into account, failing to consider relevant considerations, unreasonable/disproportionate exercise of statutory power, and failure to periodically review the continued necessity of the closure. The blanket exclusion of recreational motorcyclists, bicycle riders, horse riders, tourists and other members of the travelling public from a **major through road** for grazing purposes represents a fundamental failure to apply the statutory balancing test required by the Department's own policy guideline and the statutory framework of the *Land Act 1994*.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The Road and Its Use

Murphy's Crossing Road, Somme is a dedicated public road that adjoins Lots 91 and 92 on BNT538 and Lot 10 on BNT313. The road functions as a **major through road between Nundubbermere Road and Bents Road**, providing essential connectivity in the regional road network of the Southern Downs local government area.

See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Prior to the temporary closure, the road was actively used by members of the public, including recreational four-wheel drive enthusiasts, adventure motorcycle riders, and potentially bicycle riders and horse riders, for lawful public passage purposes. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Southern Downs Regional Council acknowledged in its November 2021 report that while Council does not maintain this section of road reserve, it remains "accessible to the public" and was "attracting recreational 4WD enthusiasts." This contemporaneous evidence establishes that the road was being used by the travelling public for road purposes immediately prior to closure. Advocacy groups confirm the road is "a safe road for non vehicular traffic" and "a very scenic route" that "would benefit tourist traffic if it were available as a through rd." " See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Significance of the Road

Major through route status: The road is not a minor track or dead-end road—it is a major through road providing connectivity between two significant roads (Nundubbermere Road and Bents Road). " This elevates its importance to the regional road network and the travelling public.

No alternate route: There is "no alternate route without extensive kms," particularly for bicycle riders and horses. "This factor is critical under the Department's policy, which provides that a road is "still needed" when "it gives the only practical access to a parcel of land whether or not

there is some other dedicated access to such land." While the policy language refers to access to a "parcel of land," the principle applies *a fortiori* to connectivity for the travelling public—if lack of practical alternative access makes a road "still needed" for landowner access, the same applies when the public has no practical alternative route. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Side road connectivity: There are "many side roads" that terminate at or connect to Murphy's Crossing Road, meaning travelers using those side roads "are currently unable to access the through road." "This creates severance of the broader road network, fragmenting public access and forcing significant detours.

Safety for non-vehicular traffic: The road is "safe... for non vehicular traffic, meaning it accommodates vulnerable road users including cyclists and horse riders who have even fewer alternative routes than motor vehicle users. The policy recognises that roads "may be used for travelling and access purposes by means of a vehicle, walking, horse, etc."

See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Tourism and scenic value: The road is "a very scenic route" that would "benefit tourist traffic," "indicating it has value beyond local access—it is part of the region's tourism infrastructure and natural amenity.

The Application and Council's Position

An application was made for temporary road closure to enable use of the road area for grazing purposes and as an internal track. In October 2021, Southern Downs Regional Council resolved not to object to the application, with Council directorates providing no substantive objection. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Significantly, Council's report noted that "due to its poor condition the applicant has advised it is attracting recreational 4WD enthusiasts which is causing further degradation of the road." This reasoning reveals that evidence of public use was treated as a problem requiring exclusion rather than as an indicator that the road was "still needed" for public purposes. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Current Council position: Advocacy groups note that "the council had no objections to its closure in 2021." However, as at January 2026, the Department has indicated that "whether the road is re-opened is a matter between Southern Downs Regional Council as road manager and the department." " This indicates ongoing negotiation between Council and the Department, with the Department considering "views from interested parties" including objections from recreational users. "

The Road Licence and Duration of Closure

Following Council's resolution, a road licence was issued under section 103 of the *Land Act* 1994. On 13 February 2024, a covenant (dealing number 723063736) was registered pursuant to section 103(3) over the affected titles, restricting separate transfer of the lots. The covenant confirms that a road licence was issued, resulting in temporary closure of the road from the date of issue. See Covenant-Dealing_Image_723063736.pdf

Critical temporal element: As at January 2026, advocacy groups report the road "has been temporarily closed for 3 years!!!!" This extended duration is highly significant for two reasons:

1. **Characterisation as "temporary":** A three-year closure begins to lose its character as "temporary" and functions as a de facto permanent closure, particularly where there is no evidence of any end date or review mechanism.
2. **Policy requirement for review:** The Department's policy provides that road licences "may be cancelled at short notice (generally three months) with no compensation," implying that continued necessity should be periodically reviewed. A three-year closure without apparent review suggests failure to monitor whether the statutory and policy criteria for closure continue to be satisfied. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Nature of road licence tenure: The policy emphasises: "A road is temporarily closed from the day the road licence issues over the road area. Although the road is temporarily closed the underlying tenure remains as road. A road licence provides a right to exclusive occupation of the road (within the conditions of the licence). The licence may be cancelled at short notice (generally three months) with no compensation." See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

This structure—short cancellation notice, no compensation, underlying tenure remaining as road—indicates that road licences are intended for genuinely temporary purposes where circumstances may change and public need may reassert. A three-year closure with no apparent review contradicts this framework.

Lease Purpose and Conditions

The application specified use for "grazing purposes and as an internal track to be used in conjunction with their adjoining land." Notably, grazing is a low-intensity pastoral use compatible with multiple other land uses. The lease conditions would have specified that the State is not responsible for maintaining access to the road, and the licensee accepted that the licence may be cancelled at short notice (generally three months) with no compensation. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Incompatibility with "temporary" characterisation: Growing crops that are "harvested annually" is contemplated as appropriate for road licences, suggesting the typical duration envisaged is one growing season or similar short period. Three years substantially exceeds this benchmark, raising the question whether the closure has exceeded its proper temporal scope. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Procedural Context: Department's Current Investigation

As at late 2025/early 2026, the Department has confirmed to advocacy groups that "this matter is still under investigation, including seeking and considering views from interested parties." "The Department has noted: "Whether the road is re-opened is a matter between Southern Downs Regional Council as road manager and the department. Your objections as provided will be taken into consideration in the making of a decision along with the views of other interested parties." "

This confirms:

1. The closure is under active review following objections from recreational users.
2. The Department is considering reopening the road.

3. The decision involves both the Department (as administrator of the Land Act) and Council (as road manager).
4. There are no statutory appeal rights for objectors under the Land Act, making judicial review the only avenue for legal challenge if the decision is adverse to the public interest.

STATUTORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Legislative Framework: Section 103, *Land Act 1994*

Section 103 authorises the Minister to issue road licences over roads, but only to adjoining owners or other specified persons, and subject to the overarching framework governing road closures. When a road licence issues, the road is temporarily closed from that day, though the underlying tenure remains as road. A road licence provides exclusive occupation rights within the licence conditions. classic.austlii.edu

Critically, section 101(3) of the *Land Act 1994* provides: "The Minister must refuse a road closure application if the Minister is satisfied the road is still needed." See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

Department Policy: Roads under the Land Act 1994 (SLM/2013/725, Version 5.04)

The Department of Resources' guideline "Roads under the Land Act 1994" establishes the framework for decision-making. The **Rationale** section states the fundamental principle:

"Land dedicated as road is an area set aside for the present or future use of the travelling public. Unless authorised under an Act, the use of a road for any other purpose must not lessen the primary purpose of public passage. Any application to use the road for another purpose has to be balanced against the present and future use for the road." See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

This express balancing requirement is not discretionary—it employs mandatory language ("has to be balanced"). The policy continues:

"A road may be used for travelling and access purposes by means of a vehicle, walking, horse, etc. unless it is restricted under the provisions of an Act. The fact that a road is not constructed does not diminish its status as road and therefore may still be available for use by the public for that purpose." See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

When a Road is "Still Needed"

Section 3.1.3 of the policy specifies that a road is considered "still needed" when, relevantly:

- "it gives the only practical access to a parcel of land whether or not there is some other dedicated access to such land";
- "it is used by the public for road... purposes and is expected to continue to be required for such purposes";
- "it is required to provide continuity to an existing road network (however temporary closure may be acceptable in this situation)." See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

Murphy's Crossing Road satisfies **all three criteria**:

1. It provides the only practical through route between Nundubbermere Road and Bents Road (no alternate route without extensive additional kilometers).
2. It was actively used by the public and demand for access continues (evidenced by ongoing advocacy for reopening). " See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf
3. It is essential for continuity of the road network, with "many side roads" terminating at or connecting to it.

The policy qualification that "temporary closure may be acceptable" for network continuity purposes applies where the closure is genuinely temporary and justified. A three-year closure of a major through road is neither genuinely temporary nor justified where public demand for access continues.

FOUNDATIONS OF REVIEW

Ground 1: Failure to Take Relevant Considerations into Account

Legal Framework

Under sections 20(2)(e) and 21(2)(e) of the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld), a decision involving an improper exercise of power includes failing to take a relevant consideration into account. In *Minister for Aboriginal Affairs v Peko-Wallsend Ltd* (1986) 162 CLR 24, Mason J held that this ground is made out only if the decision-maker was bound to consider the factor and failed to do so. What must be considered is determined by the statute's subject matter, scope and purpose. queenslandlawhandbook.org

The *Land Act 1994*'s express purpose regarding roads is to preserve them for "the present or future use of the travelling public." The Department's policy mandates that road closure applications "**have to be balanced**" against present and future public use. This is not a discretionary consideration—it is the central statutory purpose. See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

Application to Murphy's Crossing Road

The decision-maker was statutorily bound to consider and balance the following relevant factors:

(a) Present and continuing public use

Council's own contemporaneous evidence established that the road was actively being used by recreational four-wheel drive users and motorcycle riders. Advocacy groups confirm ongoing demand for access, with users from throughout Queensland and potentially other states interested in using the road. This is lawful public passage—recreational travel is a core component of "use of the travelling public." See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

A road may be used "by means of a vehicle, walking, horse, etc."—this expressly includes motorcycles, bicycles, horses, and pedestrians. The evidence indicates the road is "safe... for non vehicular traffic," making it particularly valuable for vulnerable road users who have fewer

alternative routes. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

The fact that the road is unconstructed or in poor condition "does not diminish its status as road and therefore may still be available for use by the public for that purpose." The Department's own policy forecloses any argument that poor surface condition justifies exclusion of public use. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

(b) Future public use and tourism potential

There is no evidence the decision-maker considered whether public use was expected to continue. The evidence suggests continued and strong demand for access:

- The Council report notes the road was "attracting" users, indicating increasing rather than decreasing public interest. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf
- Three years after closure, advocacy groups are actively campaigning for reopening, demonstrating sustained public demand.
- The road is described as "a very scenic route" that "would benefit tourist traffic," " indicating future tourism potential that was apparently not weighed in the decision.

Tourism is a significant economic consideration for regional Queensland. A scenic through route has quantifiable economic value beyond the immediate recreational benefit to users. There is no evidence this future economic and tourism potential was considered.

(c) Road network significance - "major through road" status

The road is a **major through road**, not a minor track or dead-end. This is a critical distinguishing feature that appears not to have been properly considered or weighted.

The policy recognises that a road is "still needed" when "it is required to provide continuity to an existing road network." Murphy's Crossing Road provides the only practical through route between two significant roads, without which users face "extensive kms" of detour. This network continuity function is a mandatory relevant consideration—the decision-maker was bound to consider and weigh it. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Moreover, "many side roads" connect to Murphy's Crossing Road, meaning users of those side roads are now stranded or forced to backtrack. This severance effect multiplies the impact of the closure beyond just the closure of Murphy's Crossing Road itself—it fragments the entire local road network. There is no evidence this broader network impact was considered.

(d) Lack of practical alternative route

The policy states a road is still needed when "it gives the only practical access to a parcel of land whether or not there is some other dedicated access to such land." While this language refers to land access, the underlying principle—that lack of practical alternatives makes a route necessary—applies equally to through routes for the travelling public. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

The evidence establishes "no alternate route without extensive kms, particularly if bicycle riders and horses are considered." For vulnerable road users (cyclists and horse riders), the lack of alternative may be absolute—they may be unable to safely use busier alternative routes that motor vehicles could navigate.

This is not a case where a minor inconvenience results from closure. The closure eliminates a practical through route entirely, forcing major detours or rendering through travel impossible for certain user types. This factor was mandatory for consideration and there is no evidence it was weighed.

(e) Whether the road is "still needed" under section 101(3)

Section 101(3) mandates refusal if the road is still needed. Policy section 3.1.3 specifies that a road used by the public for road purposes and expected to continue to be required is "still needed." See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

The evidence before the decision-maker—active public use by recreational vehicle users, ongoing demand, major through road status, network continuity function, lack of alternative route—directly satisfied this criterion, yet there is no indication this statutory consideration was applied. Indeed, the decision appears to have proceeded on the opposite premise: that public use was a problem justifying closure rather than a statutory bar to closure.

(f) Less restrictive alternatives to blanket three-year closure

The policy contemplates conditions on road licences. The decision-maker was bound to consider whether the legitimate interests of the grazing lessee could be accommodated through conditions or shorter duration rather than blanket multi-year closure, such as: See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

- **Temporal/seasonal restrictions:** Closure only during specific periods when mustering operations genuinely require it (e.g., two weeks per year during mustering), with road open at all other times.
- **Shorter initial term with formal review:** If a longer closure was contemplated, granting an initial one-year licence with mandatory formal review before renewal, ensuring continued necessity is actively assessed.
- **Conditional shared use:** Permitting continued public access subject to conditions such as:
 - Gate closure requirements
 - Speed limits
 - Signage warning of livestock presence
 - Seasonal restrictions during calving or mustering
 - Prohibition on camping or extended stops
 - Requirements for liability waivers (for organised commercial tours, distinguishing them from individual recreational users)

- **Partial closure or designated route:** If specific areas within the road reserve require protection (e.g., improved pasture, water infrastructure), designating a single-track route through the road corridor while closing other areas.
- **Infrastructure protection:** If the genuine concern was protection of specific infrastructure (gates, yards, water points), installing barriers or signage protecting that infrastructure while maintaining through access.

Each of these alternatives would accommodate both the grazing purpose and continued public passage rights, achieving the "balance" mandated by departmental policy. There is no evidence the decision-maker turned their mind to any such alternatives. The choice of the most restrictive option—total closure for three years—without consideration of less restrictive alternatives is a hallmark of failure to consider relevant factors. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

(g) Duration and ongoing necessity

A road licence creates only temporary closure, subject to cancellation "at short notice (generally three months)" with no compensation. This structure implies that continued necessity should be periodically reviewed—the short cancellation period and lack of compensation indicate the State retains flexibility to reassert the public interest if circumstances change. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

There is no evidence that at any point during the **three-year closure**, the decision-maker reviewed whether the closure remained necessary or whether circumstances had changed such that public need should prevail. The policy framework requires active, ongoing balancing—not a one-time decision that persists indefinitely regardless of changing circumstances.

Relevant changing circumstances that should have triggered review include:

- Evidence of sustained public demand for access (demonstrated by advocacy group campaigns);
- Confirmation that the road functions as a major through route with no alternative;
- Clarification that the road is safe for vulnerable users (cyclists, horses) who have even fewer alternatives;
- Recognition of tourism and scenic value.

A three-year closure without formal review suggests the decision-maker failed to consider whether ongoing closure remained justified.

Consequence of Failure

By failing to actively consider and weigh these mandatory relevant matters, the decision-maker failed to perform the required balancing exercise and failed to properly apply the section 101(3) statutory test. This constitutes jurisdictional error.

Ground 2: Taking Irrelevant Considerations into Account

Legal Framework

Under sections 20(2)(e) and 21(2)(e) of the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld), an improper exercise of power includes taking irrelevant considerations into account. What constitutes an irrelevant consideration is determined by statutory interpretation, giving effect to the scope and purpose of the Act. queenslandlawhandbook.org

The purpose of the *Land Act 1994* provisions regarding roads is to preserve public passage rights unless there is proper justification aligned with statutory criteria. Considerations that conflict with this purpose or that have no rational connection to the statutory criteria are irrelevant.

Application to Murphy's Crossing Road

The decision appears to have been influenced by the following irrelevant considerations:

(a) Landowner desire to avoid maintenance obligations already contractually accepted

Council's report noted that while the road is "primarily used as an internal track for the adjoining properties," the "adjoining owner is not permitted to undertake maintenance on the road unless it is under their control i.e. road licence." However, the lease conditions themselves specify that "the local council or the state government is not responsible for maintaining access to the road," and the licensee accepted that the licence may be cancelled at short notice with no compensation. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

The lessee contractually accepted land with these conditions. Private desire to obtain control to enable maintenance, or to avoid consequences of a bargain freely entered, is not a relevant consideration in determining whether a public road should be closed to the public.

(b) Council's cost-saving motivation

That Council "does not maintain this section of road reserve" is not a relevant consideration in assessing whether the statutory criteria for closure are met. The *Land Act 1994* does not make road closure availability contingent on whether government wishes to avoid maintenance costs. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

If lack of maintenance justified closure, the statutory framework would be inverted: the less government invests in public infrastructure, the easier it becomes to close that infrastructure to the public. This would incentivise neglect and enable closure-by-attribution. It cannot be a relevant consideration.

Indeed, the policy expressly forecloses this reasoning: "the fact that a road is not constructed does not diminish its status as road and therefore may still be available for use by the public for that purpose." Poor condition due to lack of maintenance is irrelevant to road status and public rights. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

(c) Private inconvenience from lawful public use

The Council report indicates the applicant advised that the road's poor condition was "attracting recreational 4WD enthusiasts which is causing further degradation." However, evidence of public use cannot be a relevant consideration **in favour** of closure when the statute and policy require that roads remain available for public use. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

This reasoning is circular and contradicts the statutory purpose: it treats evidence that the road is "still needed" (active public use) as justification for closure. Public use of a public road is not a "problem" requiring a "solution"—it is the exact purpose for which roads are dedicated. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Surface degradation from lawful use is a maintenance issue, not a justification for exclusion. If degradation from public use justified closing public roads, every road could be closed.

(d) Desire for private exclusivity inconsistent with grazing purpose

Total, indefinite exclusion of the public is not necessary for grazing purposes. Cattle grazing occurs on unfenced road reserves, state forests with public access, and pastoral leases with through-roads throughout Queensland.

[detsi.qld.gov](https://www.detsi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/371203/queensland-state-forest-user-alliance.pdf)

Grazing requires only that stock have access to pasture and water, and that they not be unduly disturbed. Occasional vehicle passage (even daily passage) does not preclude grazing—cattle habituate to traffic. The desire for exclusive private control **beyond what the proposed land use (grazing) requires** is not a consideration relevant to whether temporary closure is justified.

(e) Precedent and "slippery slope" concerns not articulated

While not explicitly mentioned in available materials, any consideration that "if we refuse this application, we'll have to refuse others" would be an irrelevant consideration. Each application must be determined on its own merits against statutory criteria. The fact that other closures may have been inappropriately approved does not justify approving this one. armstronglegal.com

Conversely, proper considerations include the precedent effect of approving closures of major through roads for marginal private convenience—such precedent erodes the statutory protection of public passage rights and would be a relevant consideration **against** closure.

Consequence

Taking these irrelevant considerations into account infected the decision-making process and constitutes jurisdictional error, particularly where (as here) the irrelevant considerations appear to have been dominant or substantial factors. armstronglegal.com

Ground 3: Unreasonableness / Disproportionality

Legal Framework

Under sections 20(2)(h), 21(2)(h) and 23(g) of the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld), a decision may be reviewed if it involved an exercise of power that is so unreasonable that no reasonable person could have made it. Recent authority has clarified that unreasonableness encompasses disproportionality and requires that administrative power be exercised reasonably having regard to the statutory purpose.

[classic.austlii.edu](<https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/QldJSchol/2021/11.pdf>)

In *Minister for Immigration and Citizenship v Li* (2013) 249 CLR 332, the High Court held that discretionary statutory power carries an implied requirement of reasonableness. In *McCloy v New South Wales* (2015) 257 CLR 178, the High Court endorsed structured proportionality analysis. Queensland courts have increasingly recognised proportionality as an element of

administrative law reasonableness, particularly where decisions significantly impact rights or where the statutory framework itself requires balancing competing interests. ntlawyers.com

Application: The Decision is Unreasonable/Disproportionate

The decision to grant a road licence resulting in total three-year exclusion of the public from a major through road is unreasonable in the legal sense because it fails each element of proportionality analysis:

(a) Lack of Rational Connection (Suitability)

Legitimate objective: Protecting and enabling pastoral grazing operations on the licensee's adjoining land.

Means chosen: Total, blanket closure of a major public through road to all members of the travelling public for three years.

Rational connection analysis: The means chosen bears no rational connection to the stated objective.

Grazing and recreational vehicle use are demonstrably compatible throughout rural Australia:

- Extensive recreational trail bike and four-wheel drive use occurs on formed and unformed roads throughout Queensland's pastoral districts without precluding grazing operations. unsealed4x4.com
- Queensland State Forest policy explicitly addresses management of interactions between recreational users and grazing leaseholders, recognising both uses can coexist. [\[detsi.qld.gov\]\(https://www.detsi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/371203/queensland-state-forest-user-alliance.pdf\)](https://www.detsi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/371203/queensland-state-forest-user-alliance.pdf)
- Standard rural practice throughout Australia involves shared use of roads and tracks across grazing land, with vehicles required only to close gates and observe basic courtesy. unsealed4x4.com
- Cattle regularly graze adjacent to roads with vehicle traffic—indeed, cattle habituation to vehicle presence is normal and expected in rural areas.

The Council's suggestion that recreational users cause "degradation" of the road surface is a maintenance issue, not a fundamental incompatibility with grazing. Moreover, the Department's policy expressly states that poor condition "does not diminish its status as road." See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

The total exclusion chosen is therefore not rationally connected to protecting grazing operations—it is connected only to the private preference for exclusivity.

(b) Necessity - Failure to Consider Less Restrictive Alternatives

Even if some restriction on public access could be justified to protect grazing operations (which is doubtful given widespread compatibility), the decision-maker failed to consider obvious and compelling alternatives that would impose lesser burdens on the public right of passage.

The detailed alternatives outlined under Ground 1(f) above—temporal restrictions, shorter term with review, conditional shared use, partial closure, infrastructure protection—would each accommodate both uses while maintaining the public right to use a major through route.

The Department's own policy structure contemplates such alternatives: road licences are subject to cancellation on three months' notice, and the policy discusses conditions on licences. This framework is designed to enable flexibility and graduated responses. Choosing the maximum restriction (total three-year closure) without considering these alternatives is paradigmatic unreasonableness. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

(c) Adequate in Balance (Proportionality Stricto Sensu)

Even accepting *arguendo* that total closure was suitable and necessary (which is denied), the decision fails the final proportionality test: the burden imposed on the public is grossly disproportionate to the benefit conferred on the private interest.

Impact on public:

1. **Total exclusion from major through route:** This is not closure of a minor track—it is closure of a major through road providing connectivity between two significant roads. Users seeking to travel between Nundubbermere Road and Bents Road must now detour "extensive kms," turning a direct route into a lengthy, indirect journey.
2. **Severance of road network:** "Many side roads" terminate at or connect to Murphy's Crossing Road. Users of those side roads are now stranded—they cannot access the through route. This multiplies the impact beyond just Murphy's Crossing Road users to affect all users of connected roads.
3. **Elimination of practical route for vulnerable users:** For bicycle riders and horse riders, the detour may not just be inconvenient—it may be impossible or unsafe. Alternative routes may involve higher-speed traffic, longer distances beyond the capability of these users, or terrain unsuitable for horses. The closure may effectively eliminate through travel for these user groups entirely.
4. **Loss of tourism and scenic amenity:** The closure removes "a very scenic route" from public access, denying the community (including locals and visitors) access to natural amenity and denying the regional economy potential tourism benefit.
5. **Three-year duration:** The closure has persisted for three years, transforming what should be a short-term, genuinely temporary arrangement into prolonged deprivation of public rights. The impact compounds over time—it is not merely three years of inconvenience, but three years of precedent-setting that public rights can be indefinitely subordinated to private convenience.
6. **No end date or review:** There is no evidence of any defined end date or formal review process. The closure could continue indefinitely. The uncertainty itself imposes burden—users cannot plan routes or advocacy campaigns around a known timeline.

Benefit to private interest:

The benefit to the licensee is marginal convenience and aesthetic preference for private exclusivity:

1. **Grazing operations function with public access:** As discussed, grazing and occasional vehicle passage are compatible. The licensee gains no essential operational advantage—only the convenience of not encountering occasional recreational users.
2. **No long-term security:** The licensee accepted that the licence can be cancelled on three months' notice without compensation. The licensee has made no long-term investment reliant on closure and has no legitimate expectation of permanence. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf
3. **Maintenance control:** The licensee may value ability to undertake road maintenance. However, this is a benefit to the licensee personally (ability to improve infrastructure they use), not a benefit necessary for grazing. It is purely private benefit. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf
4. **Concerns about liability, theft, or stock disturbance:** To the extent these motivate the closure:
 - **Liability:** All landholders adjacent to public roads face potential liability. This is managed through insurance, signage, and standard precautions—not by closing public roads.
 - **Theft/property damage:** These concerns, even if well-founded, apply to any property accessible by public road. If they justified closure, every residential street could be closed to exclude "undesirables." This cannot be accepted as a legitimate benefit justifying closure.
 - **Stock disturbance:** As discussed, cattle habituate to traffic. Stock disturbance from occasional recreational users is minimal and is the normal incident of operating grazing land adjacent to public roads throughout Australia.

Comparison of burdens:

The public permanently (or at least indefinitely for three years and counting) loses access to a major through route, severing network connectivity and eliminating practical routes for vulnerable users. The regional economy loses potential tourism benefit. The precedent erodes statutory protections of public passage rights across Queensland.

The private licensee gains marginal convenience beyond what already obtained (lessee already had use of adjoining land for grazing and already had the option to seek Council approval for maintenance).

This is inadequate in balance. The public burden vastly outweighs the private benefit. No reasonable decision-maker, properly weighing these impacts, could conclude the balance favored closure.

(d) Failure to Perform the Mandatory Balancing Exercise

Most fundamentally, the decision is unreasonable because it fails to exhibit any balancing at all. The Department's policy mandates: "Any application to use the road for another purpose **has to be balanced** against the present and future use for the road." (emphasis added) See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

There is no indication in the available material that any genuine balancing occurred. The evidence of active public use was present and known. The major through road status and lack of alternatives were either known or readily ascertainable. The three-year duration without review is inconsistent with the "temporary" characterisation. See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Yet the decision resulted in total, indefinite exclusion. A proper balancing exercise that weighed:

- The fundamental public interest in maintaining roads for public passage, See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf
- The active public use of this particular road, See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf
- The major through route status and network significance,
- The lack of practical alternative,
- The policy that alternative road use "must not lessen the primary purpose of public passage," See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf
- The compatibility of grazing and recreational vehicle use, and
- The availability of less restrictive alternatives and shorter durations with review

could not reasonably have concluded that total, three-year (and counting) closure was appropriate.

The decision exhibits no evidence of balancing and appears to have treated the applicant's preference for closure, coupled with Council's non-objection, as sufficient. This is not the "balancing" required by policy—it is capitulation to private preference over public right.

Conclusion on Unreasonableness

The decision to close Murphy's Crossing Road for three years is legally unreasonable because it:

- Lacks rational connection between means (total closure) and legitimate end (grazing protection);
- Failed to consider obvious less restrictive alternatives;
- Imposes burdens on the public grossly disproportionate to benefits conferred;
- Failed to account for major through road status, network significance, and lack of alternatives;
- Extended a purportedly "temporary" closure for three years without formal review; and
- Failed to perform the mandatory statutory and policy-required balancing of public passage rights against alternative use.

No reasonable decision-maker, properly directing themselves to the statutory purpose and policy requirements, could have reached this decision.

[robinson.com](<https://www.robinson.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2014-MAR-Paper-Judicial-Review-for-ALA-National-Conference-25-October-2014.pdf>)

Ground 4: Failure to Properly Apply Statutory Test - Section 101(3)

The Statutory Mandate

Section 101(3) of the *Land Act 1994* provides: "The Minister must refuse a road closure application if the Minister is satisfied the road is still needed." See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

This is a mandatory provision—"must refuse." It is not discretionary. If the threshold condition (road is still needed) is met, refusal is required.

Policy Guidance on "Still Needed"

The Department's policy provides that a road is still needed when, relevantly:

- "it gives the only practical access to a parcel of land whether or not there is some other dedicated access to such land";
- "it is used by the public for road... purposes and is expected to continue to be required for such purposes"; or
- "it is required to provide continuity to an existing road network (however temporary closure may be acceptable in this situation)." See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

Application

The evidence before the decision-maker established that Murphy's Crossing Road satisfied **all three criteria**:

(a) Only practical access / through route:

The road provides the only practical through route between Nundubbermere Road and Bents Road, with "no alternate route without extensive kms. While the policy language refers to "access to a parcel of land," the principle applies equally (indeed, more strongly) to through routes for the travelling public. If lack of practical alternative makes a road "still needed" for property access, *a fortiori* it makes a through road "still needed" for public travel.

(b) Used by public and expected to continue:

Council's report expressly stated the road was "attracting recreational 4WD enthusiasts." This is public use for road purposes—recreational travel by vehicle is quintessential "use of the travelling public." See *extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf*

Use was expected to continue—the report noted the road was "attracting" users (present continuous tense, indicating ongoing and growing use). Three years later, advocacy groups continue actively campaigning for reopening, demonstrating sustained public demand. There is no evidence suggesting public need has ceased or diminished—rather, the evidence indicates it has persisted and possibly intensified.

(c) Required for continuity of road network:

The road provides connectivity between two significant roads and serves as the terminus for "many side roads. It is essential for network continuity. The policy qualification that "temporary closure may be acceptable" for network roads applies only to genuinely temporary closures with proper justification. A three-year closure of a major through route without formal review or defined end date is not within the scope of acceptable temporary closure.

The Logical Error

The decision-maker appears to have committed a fundamental logical error: treating evidence that the road was "still needed" (active public use, major through road status, lack of alternative) as justification for closure rather than as a mandatory bar to closure.

Council's report states the applicant advised the road "is attracting recreational 4WD enthusiasts which is causing further degradation of the road." This was framed as a reason supporting closure. But this reasoning is backwards: See extract-Item-12.2-Agenda-of-SD-Ordinary-Council-Meeting-10.11.2021.pdf

Correct statutory reasoning:

- Evidence of active public use → Road is being used by public → Road is expected to continue to be required → Road is "still needed" under policy → Section 101(3) mandates refusal of closure.

Apparent actual reasoning:

- Evidence of active public use → Applicant finds public use inconvenient → Public use causes maintenance issues → Close road to exclude public.

This inverts the statutory hierarchy. The *Land Act 1994* declares that roads are "set aside for the present or future use of the travelling public" and that use for another purpose "must not lessen the primary purpose of public passage." Public passage is the primary, protected purpose. The decision subordinated this primary purpose to private convenience. See *Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf*

Consequence

By failing to properly apply section 101(3)—specifically, by failing to recognise that evidence of active public use, major through road status, and lack of alternative triggered the mandatory refusal provision—the decision-maker fell into jurisdictional error. The decision could not lawfully have been made if section 101(3) had been properly applied.

Ground 5: Failure to Review Ongoing Necessity and Improper Characterisation as "Temporary"

Legal Framework

A decision may be challenged where the decision-maker has failed to monitor or review whether the conditions justifying the decision continue to exist, particularly where:

- The statutory or policy framework contemplates ongoing assessment;
- Circumstances have materially changed since the initial decision; or
- A decision characterized as "temporary" persists so long as to lose that character. [lec.nsw.gov](<https://lec.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/dcj/ctsd/lec/documents/speeches->

[and-papers/preston_judicial%20review%20of%20illegality%20and%20irrationality%20of%20administrative%20decisions.pdf](#)

Application

(a) Three-year duration inconsistent with "temporary" characterisation

The road licence creates a "temporary" closure. However, after three years, the closure has functionally become permanent. At what point does "temporary" lose its meaning? Three years substantially exceeds any reasonable understanding of temporary for a road closure ostensibly for grazing purposes. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

The policy notes that road licences are appropriate for "crops that are harvested annually," suggesting the typical duration envisaged is one growing season (a year or less). Three years is triple this benchmark. The closure has exceeded the temporal scope reasonably contemplated by the "temporary closure" framework. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

(b) Policy structure implies ongoing review obligation

The policy emphasises that road licences "may be cancelled at short notice (generally three months) with no compensation." This structure—short cancellation notice, no compensation—serves a purpose: it preserves State flexibility to reassert the public interest if circumstances change or if the closure is no longer justified. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

But this flexibility is meaningful only if there is ongoing monitoring and review. If a road licence is granted and then ignored for three years regardless of changing circumstances, the short-cancellation structure becomes illusory.

The policy framework implies an ongoing obligation to monitor whether:

- The closure remains necessary for the licensed purpose;
- Public need for the road has changed;
- The balance has shifted such that public passage rights should reassert.

There is no evidence of any formal review during the three-year closure period. The Department's current "investigation" in response to public objections suggests review is occurring only because the public has forced it, not because of any systematic review mechanism.

(c) Changed circumstances and new information warrant reassessment

Since the initial decision (2021-2024), significant information has come to light or circumstances have changed:

1. **Confirmation of major through road status:** The advocacy campaign has clarified that this is not a minor track but a major through road between significant roads. It is unclear whether this was properly appreciated in the initial decision.

2. **Confirmation of lack of alternatives:** The evidence now clearly establishes "no alternate route without extensive kms, particularly if bicycle riders and horses are considered. This factor may not have been adequately explored initially.
3. **Sustained public demand:** The fact that three years after closure, organised advocacy groups are actively campaigning for reopening demonstrates that public demand has not dissipated. The initial decision may have underestimated ongoing public interest.
4. **Network severance impact:** The fact that "many side roads" terminate at Murphy's Crossing Road means the impact extends beyond direct users to all users of connected roads. This broader impact may not have been fully appreciated initially.
5. **Tourism and scenic value:** Recognition that the road is "a very scenic route" with tourism potential adds an economic dimension potentially not considered initially.

Each of these factors warranted reassessment of whether the closure remained justified. The failure to conduct any formal review over three years, despite these changed circumstances and new information, constitutes a failure to properly exercise ongoing administrative discretion.

Consequence

The failure to review ongoing necessity over a three-year period, coupled with the improper characterisation of a multi-year closure as "temporary," constitutes jurisdictional error. A road licence granted for temporary purposes cannot permissibly persist indefinitely without reassessment of whether the statutory criteria continue to be satisfied.

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The Fundamental Public Right to Roads

Roads have a special status in Australian law as public assets dedicated to public passage. The Department's policy recognises this: "Land dedicated as road is an area set aside for the present or future use of the travelling public." This is not a mere administrative convenience—it reflects a fundamental principle that the public has a right to travel freely on public roads. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

The fact that a road is unconstructed, unsealed, or in poor condition "does not diminish its status as road and therefore may still be available for use by the public for that purpose." Form does not determine function. Murphy's Crossing Road, though unsealed and poorly maintained, remained a lawful public road available for public passage—and retains that status even while temporarily closed under the licence. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Recreational Use is Legitimate Public Use

Adventure motorcycle riding, four-wheel driving, cycling, and horse riding on rural roads are lawful exercises of public passage rights. The Department's policy expressly contemplates that roads "may be used for travelling and access purposes by means of a vehicle, walking, horse, etc." This includes recreational travel—the purpose of travel (recreation vs. commuting vs. commerce) is immaterial to the right to travel. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Queensland policy and legislative frameworks recognise recreational vehicle use as a legitimate activity requiring accommodation, not wholesale exclusion. The 2007 Parliamentary Research Brief "Trail Bikes – Issues and Challenges" identified access difficulties for trail bike riders and noted the need for balanced solutions. The solution is not to close roads to recreational users, but to manage access appropriately. Blanket closures compound rather than solve the access challenges identified in that Report.

[documents.parliament.qld.gov](<https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/explore/ResearchPublications/ResearchBriefs/2007/RBR200723.pdf>)

Major Through Roads Require Higher Protection

Not all roads are equal in significance. A dead-end track serving a single property has less public importance than a major through road connecting significant routes and serving as a network link.

The policy recognises this distinction: it provides that no-through roads (serving only one adjoining owner) are exempt from public notice requirements, implying they may be more readily closed. Conversely, through roads—particularly those providing "continuity to an existing road network"—are recognised as "still needed" and thus protected from closure. See Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf

Murphy's Crossing Road is at the high end of this spectrum: it is a major through road, it connects two significant roads, it serves multiple side roads, and it has no practical alternative. Such roads warrant maximum protection under the statutory framework. The decision to close such a road for marginal private benefit represents a fundamental misapplication of priorities.

Compatibility of Grazing and Recreational Access

The suggestion that grazing requires total exclusion of recreational vehicle users is refuted by extensive real-world evidence:

- **Queensland State Forests:** State forests accommodate both grazing leases and recreational access, with policy recognising that "no lease can exclude other lawful uses of the forest including recreational use." While tensions exist, the solution is management and clear protocols, not blanket exclusion.
[detsi.qld.gov](https://www.detsi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/371203/queensland-state-forest-user-alliance.pdf)
- **Pastoral leases throughout Australia:** Millions of hectares of pastoral lease land are traversed by roads and tracks used by recreational vehicles. Graziers accommodate this as a normal incident of rural land use.
[cdn.environment.sa.gov](<https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/The-Pastoral-Lease-Handbook-Version-1-December-2024-FINAL.pdf>)
- **Ubiquity of shared use:** Drive through any rural area in Queensland and one encounters cattle grazing adjacent to roads—public roads, council roads, state-controlled roads. The coexistence is unremarkable. The suggestion that grazing on Murphy's Crossing Road uniquely requires total exclusion of passing vehicles is implausible.

Equity and Consistency: The Residential Street Analogy

The community submission makes a powerful equity point: "Many of us would love the chance to close our local streets so that 'undesirables' can't come past and sometimes steal, damage and upset us. But we can't as that is ridiculous.

This analogy exposes the inconsistency in permitting rural road closures for reasons that would be rejected in urban contexts:

- **Urban context:** Residential property owners adjacent to public streets face noise, traffic, potential theft, property damage, and intrusion. Yet they cannot close the public street to exclude "undesirables" because the street serves a public purpose that trumps private inconvenience.
- **Rural context:** Rural property owners adjacent to public roads face the same concerns (arguably to a lesser degree given lower traffic volume). Yet the decision permits closure of the public road for these exact reasons.

The statutory purpose—protecting public passage rights—applies equally in urban and rural contexts. If security and convenience concerns don't justify closing urban streets, they cannot justify closing rural roads. The same *Land Act 1994* framework governs both. Consistency requires that major through routes be afforded similar protection regardless of whether they are sealed suburban streets or unsealed rural roads.

Precedent and Slippery Slope

If the precedent is accepted that a grazing lessee can obtain three-year blanket closure of a major public through road to exclude lawful public users on grounds of private convenience, the principle would extend far beyond Murphy's Crossing Road:

- Any landholder adjacent to an unmaintained public road could argue that public use causes inconvenience, property degradation, or security concerns.
- These concerns are universal—they apply to all unmaintained rural roads throughout Queensland.
- If accepted as sufficient justification, the State's network of rural roads would be subject to piecemeal closure-by-attribution: each landholder obtaining "temporary" closure, which then persists indefinitely without review.

The result would be progressive privatisation of the public road network—not through explicit policy decision, but through accretion of individual closures that are never reviewed or reversed. This cannot be reconciled with the statutory framework protecting roads "for the present or future use of the travelling public." See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

The principle that public roads remain open to the public absent compelling justification is fundamental to the rule of law and freedom of movement. Erosion of this principle—one convenient closure at a time—would fundamentally alter the balance of public and private rights that the *Land Act 1994* seeks to maintain.

PROCEDURAL CONTEXT AND URGENCY

Current Departmental Investigation

The Department has confirmed the matter is "still under investigation, including seeking and considering views from interested parties. The Department has stated: "Whether the road is re-opened is a matter between Southern Downs Regional Council as road manager and the department. Your objections as provided will be taken into consideration in the making of a decision along with the views of other interested parties.

This confirms:

1. A decision is imminent regarding whether to reopen the road or continue the closure.
2. The Department is considering objections from recreational users.
3. The decision involves both the Department and Council.
4. There are "no appeal or 'right of reply' provisions available to objectors under the Land Act 1994, making judicial review the only avenue for legal challenge if the decision is adverse.

Importance of Advocacy and Public Submissions

Advocacy groups have correctly identified that public pressure on both the Department and Council is critical:

- The Department is "seeking and considering views from interested parties—the volume and quality of objections may influence the decision.
- Council's position is relevant since "whether the road is re-opened is a matter between Southern Downs Regional Council as road manager and the department.
- Council "had no objections to its closure in 2021—reversing this position requires demonstrating to Council that the closure is contrary to public interest and Council's obligations as road manager.

The advocacy strategy of requesting mass public submissions to both the Department (Lsseq@nrmmrd.qld.gov.au, Attn: Kristal Keegan, Senior Land Officer) and Council (Mail@sdrq.qld.gov.au) is sound and should be pursued vigorously alongside preparation for potential judicial review.

Timing for Judicial Review

If the Department's investigation results in a decision to continue the closure (or to issue a new/renewed road licence), that decision will be reviewable under the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld). Time limits apply:

- **28 days** from the date the decision is made or the applicant receives notice of the decision (section 31). armstronglegal.com
- Extension of time may be granted by the Court, but delay weakens the application.
- Where a decision is imminent, it is prudent to prepare the application for judicial review in advance, ready to file immediately upon adverse decision.

Urgency arises from:

1. A decision is imminent (matter "under investigation").

2. The closure has already persisted three years—every day of continued closure compounds the harm to public interests.
3. The 28-day limitation period begins running immediately upon decision, requiring prompt action.

RELIEF SOUGHT

The applicants (recreational users affected by the closure, represented by trail bike advocacy groups such as Adventure Access, bicycle touring groups, horse riding associations, or individuals with standing) put the reviewer on notice that that may be entitled to seek the following relief under the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld):

Primary Relief

1. **Certiorari** quashing the decision to issue the road licence over Murphy's Crossing Road, Somme (or any subsequent decision to continue or renew the closure).
2. **Mandamus** directing the Minister (or delegate) to:
 - Refuse the application for road closure/licence on the basis that the road is "still needed" under section 101(3);
 - Alternatively, reconsider the application in accordance with law, specifically:
 - Properly applying the mandatory balancing test required by policy SLM/2013/725;
 - Considering whether the road is "still needed" under section 101(3) having regard to evidence of public use, major through road status, lack of alternative, and network significance;
 - Considering relevant factors including present and future public use, tourism potential, compatibility of uses, and less restrictive alternatives;
 - Not taking into account irrelevant considerations such as private convenience, cost-saving, or circular reasoning treating public use as a problem;
 - Exercising the discretion reasonably and proportionately, including considering shorter duration, conditional access, or shared use arrangements rather than total blanket closure.
3. **Declaration** that:
 - The decision to issue the road licence (and any subsequent decision to continue or renew it) was affected by jurisdictional error;
 - Murphy's Crossing Road is a major through road that is "still needed" under section 101(3) of the *Land Act 1994* having regard to:
 - Active public use;
 - Major through road status connecting two significant roads;

- No practical alternative route, particularly for vulnerable users (cyclists, horses);
- Network continuity function serving many side roads;
- Tourism and scenic value;
- Recreational motorcycle riders, four-wheel drive users, bicycle riders, horse riders, and tourists are members of "the travelling public" with rights to use dedicated public roads;
- Evidence of active public use of a road is a relevant consideration indicating the road is "still needed" under section 101(3), not a justification for closure;
- A three-year closure of a major through road cannot properly be characterised as "temporary" and requires formal review of ongoing necessity;
- The Department's policy requirement that any application "has to be balanced against the present and future use for the road" mandates active weighing of competing interests, not capitulation to private preference.

Interim Relief

1. **Interim order** (pending final determination) that:
 - The road licence be suspended and Murphy's Crossing Road be immediately reopened to public use; or
 - Alternatively, that the licence be subject to interim conditions permitting continued recreational access on specified terms (e.g., daylight hours, gate closure requirements, liability disclaimers); or
 - At minimum, that the status quo be preserved pending expedited final hearing (if the Department is proposing to grant a new/renewed licence).

Ancillary Relief

1. **Order** under section 32 of the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld) requiring the decision-maker to provide a written statement of reasons for the decision (if not already provided).
2. **Costs** of the application.

STANDING

Standing exists under section 20 of the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld), which requires that the applicant be "a person aggrieved" by the decision.

[qlrc.qld.gov](https://www.qlrc.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/822706/2.7-briefing-note-judicial-review.pdf)

Individual recreational users who previously accessed Murphy's Crossing Road or who wish to use it as a through route, and who are now excluded by the closure, have interests directly and adversely affected by the decision. They are persons aggrieved with clear standing to seek review. armstronglegal.com

Incorporated associations representing trail bike riders, four-wheel drive enthusiasts, bicycle touring groups, or horse riding associations (such as Adventure Access or similar advocacy bodies) may have standing where:

- Their members are adversely affected by the closure;
- The challenge raises matters of public interest regarding access to public roads; and
- The association's objects include advocacy for recreational access.
[qlrc.qld.gov](https://www.qlrc.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/822706/2.7-briefing-note-judicial-review.pdf)

Standing is particularly strong in this case because:

1. The affected users are identifiable and their interest (right to use a public road) is direct and substantial.
2. The closure affects a broad class (all recreational vehicle users, cyclists, horse riders, tourists), not merely idiosyncratic individual interest.
3. The challenge raises matters of significant public interest: protection of public road networks, limits on privatisation of public assets, and proper application of statutory balancing requirements.
4. No other party is better placed to bring the challenge—the affected users are the persons most directly impacted.

CONCLUSION

The three-year temporary closure of Murphy's Crossing Road—a major through road providing the only practical route between two significant roads, serving as a network link for many side roads, and offering no alternative particularly for vulnerable users—represents a profound failure to balance public and private interests as required by the *Land Act 1994* and departmental policy.

The decision:

1. **Failed to take into account highly relevant considerations:** Present public use, continuing demand, major through road status, network significance, lack of practical alternative (particularly for cyclists and horses), tourism and scenic value, compatibility of grazing and recreational use, duration and ongoing necessity, and less restrictive alternatives.
2. **Took into account irrelevant considerations:** Private preference for exclusive control beyond what grazing requires, cost-saving motivations, circular reasoning treating evidence of public use as a problem rather than as protected right, and landowner desire to avoid consequences of bargains freely entered.
3. **Was unreasonable and disproportionate:** Imposed total extinguishment of public rights to achieve marginal private convenience, without rational connection between means and end, without consideration of alternatives, and with grossly disproportionate burden on public compared to benefit to private interest.

4. **Failed to properly apply the mandatory statutory test:** Section 101(3) required refusal if the road was "still needed"—a threshold plainly satisfied by evidence of active public use, major through road status, lack of alternative, and network continuity function.
5. **Improperly characterised multi-year closure as "temporary" and failed to review ongoing necessity:** Three years substantially exceeds any reasonable understanding of "temporary" for a road closure ostensibly for grazing. The policy framework implies ongoing review obligation, yet no formal reassessment has occurred despite changed circumstances and new information.

The adventure motorcycle riders, four-wheel drive users, bicycle riders, horse riders, and tourists seeking to use Murphy's Crossing Road are "the travelling public" whose rights the *Land Act 1994* protects. They are law-abiding, taxpaying Queenslanders seeking to exercise their common law and statutory right to travel on public roads. They seek to use a major through route for its dedicated purpose—public passage—in a manner entirely compatible with grazing use.

The blanket, three-year (and counting) exclusion of these users to serve private convenience, without proper statutory justification or balancing, is unlawful.

The decision should be quashed and the road immediately reopened to public use. If the matter is remitted for reconsideration, that reconsideration must apply the correct legal principles: recognition that Murphy's Crossing Road is a major through road that is "still needed," active balancing of public passage rights against private use (with public rights as the primary statutory purpose), and consideration of less restrictive alternatives if any restriction can be justified at all.

The travelling public has a right to travel on public roads. That right has been unlawfully extinguished for three years. It is time to reopen Murphy's Crossing Road.

APPENDIX: INTEGRATION OF ADVOCACY GROUP EVIDENCE

The submissions from Adventure Access and community members provide critical factual evidence that strengthens the legal grounds:

Major Through Road Status

Adventure Access identifies Murphy's Crossing Road as "a major through road between Nundubbermere Rd and Bents Rd. This is a critical fact distinguishing this case from closure of minor tracks or dead-end roads. Major through roads warrant maximum protection under the policy framework.

Legal significance: The policy provides that a road is "still needed" when "it is required to provide continuity to an existing road network." A major through road by definition provides such continuity. The decision-maker's failure to properly weight this factor constitutes failure to consider a mandatory relevant consideration. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

No Practical Alternative

"There is no alternate route without extensive kms, particularly if bicycle riders and horses are considered.

Legal significance: The policy states a road is still needed when "it gives the only practical access." While the policy language refers to property access, the principle applies equally to through routes. For vulnerable users (cyclists, horses), the lack of alternative may be absolute—they cannot safely navigate busy alternative routes. This factor directly satisfies the section 101(3) "still needed" criterion and should have mandated refusal. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Continuing Public Demand

"If open, the road would be used by recreational travelers and the general traveling public. The fact that three years after closure, organised advocacy groups are actively campaigning demonstrates sustained, not diminishing, public interest.

Legal significance: Policy requires consideration of "future use for the road." The evidence establishes future use is expected and desired. This is a mandatory relevant consideration that appears not to have been weighed. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Network Severance

"There are many side roads, traveling from these roads you are currently unable to access the through road

Legal significance: The impact extends beyond direct users of Murphy's Crossing Road to all users of connected roads. This multiplies the public harm and strengthens the "still needed" / network continuity argument. It also demonstrates disproportionate impact under the unreasonableness ground.

Safety for Non-Vehicular Traffic

"It is a safe road for non vehicular traffic.

Legal significance: The road accommodates vulnerable users (cyclists, horses, pedestrians) who have the fewest alternatives. The policy expressly protects access "by means of a vehicle, walking, horse, etc." Closure eliminates a safe route for the most vulnerable users—this factor should have weighed heavily against closure. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Tourism and Scenic Value

"It's a very scenic route and would benefit tourist traffic if it were available as a through rd.

Legal significance: This adds an economic dimension not captured in pure "recreational use" framing. Tourism is economically significant for regional Queensland. Closure removes potential tourism infrastructure from public access and denies regional economic benefit. This is a relevant consideration apparently not weighed.

Procedural Insights

Adventure Access notes: "This type of road closures remains current until the public request that it be opened again.

Legal significance: If true that road licences persist indefinitely unless the public affirmatively requests reopening, this inverts the statutory framework. The *Land Act 1994* requires that any

use "has to be balanced against the present and future use for the road"—this implies ongoing, affirmative justification by the licensee, not a presumption of continued closure absent public complaint. If the Department operates on the premise that closures persist by default, this represents systemic failure to properly apply the balancing requirement. See [Roads-under-the-Land-Act-1994-policy-register-guideline-SLM-2013-725-dated-10.07.2025.pdf](#)

Community Equity Arguments


The community submission captures the equity concern: residents near urban streets face the same problems (theft, damage, intrusion) but cannot close public streets for their convenience. The same principle must apply to rural roads—private convenience cannot trump public passage rights.

Legal significance: This is the proportionality / adequacy-in-balance argument made accessible. It exposes that the decision applies a different standard to rural roads than would be tolerated for urban streets, despite the same statutory framework governing both.

This revised submission incorporates all available evidence regarding Murphy's Crossing Road including the major through road status, lack of alternatives, network severance, duration of closure, and ongoing advocacy efforts. It is prepared for the purposes of instructing counsel and supporting an application for judicial review under the *Judicial Review Act 1991 (Qld)*. It should be read in conjunction with all supporting evidence, including Council reports, the road licence (once obtained), title searches, covenant dealing 723063736, and affidavits from affected recreational users and advocacy groups.

13.3 Application for Permanent Road Closure – Between Kenilworth Street and Grove Avenue, Morgan Park – Adjacent to Lot 3 on SP218449

Document Information

 <p>Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL</p>	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Land Management Officer	ECM Function No/s: 3652112

Recommendation

THAT:

1. Pursuant to section 99(1) of the Land Act 1994, Council objects to the application for a permanent road closure over road reserve between Kenilworth Street and Grove Avenue, Morgan Park, being adjacent to Lot 3 on SP218449.
2. The Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, be authorised to respond to, and answer the questions posed by, the Department.
3. The Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, be authorised to finalise easement conditions and sign proposed survey plans resulting from any closure the Minister approves.

REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council as to the matters and circumstances surrounding the request for its answer to certain questions regarding the proposed permanent road closure of part of the road reserve, and retention of a ten-meter (10m) wide strip of road reserve.

Background

Council, on 24 May 2023, supported a request from the same applicant to close the entire road reserve. The Department refused the application on the basis that it was the only dedicated access to Lot 131 on RP31029. The Department advised the applicant that it would consider a request for closure of part of the reserve, leaving a ten-meter (10m) road reserve to retain access for Lot 131 on RP31029. The Department sought written confirmation from Council on the following questions:

1. That council does not object to the road closure application of approximate land area of 3,700m² to allow dedicated access to lot 131;
2. From a safety perspective agreeing to a minimum 10-meter width of South Avenue to remain open.
3. Confirmation that the proposal is consistent to Council’s development, town planning and infrastructure requirements for industrial land road widths; and

- Council accepts responsibility, under the *Local Government Act 2009* (LGA), for the ongoing day-to-day management, control and regulation of the portion of South Avenue that remains open to provide access to Lot 131.

On 22 April 2026, Council received a request from Oway Industrial & Commercial Property, South Brisbane, seeking views on an application to permanently close a section of the road reserve between Kenilworth Street and Grove Ave, Morgan Park, as shown in area A in Figure 1, below.

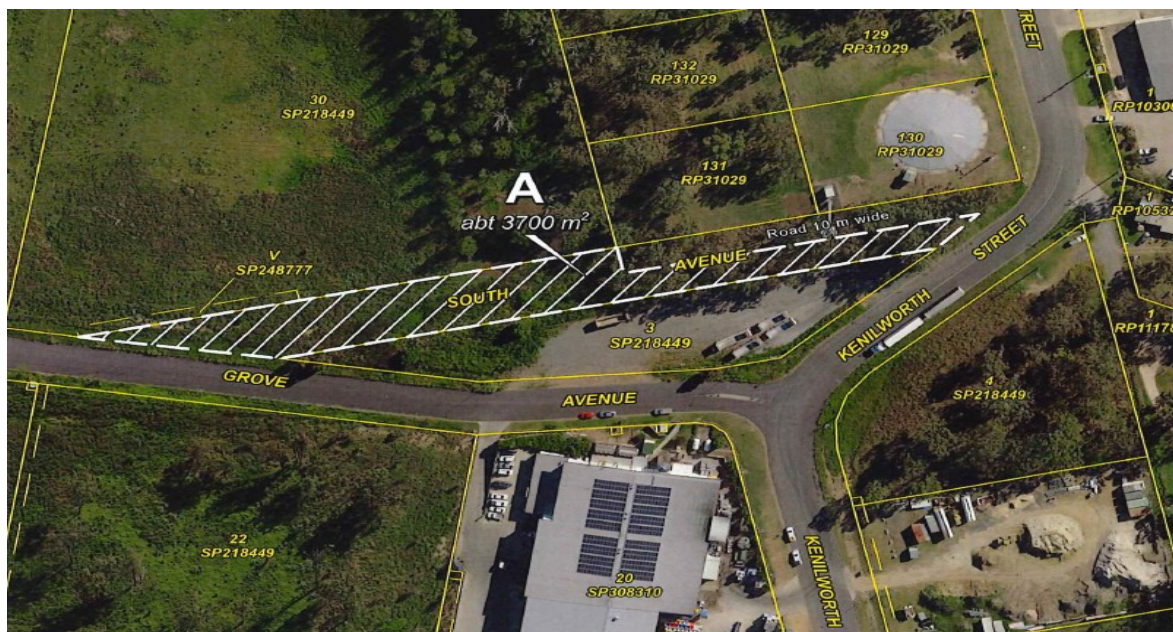


Figure 1

The applicant seeks to permanently close the existing road reserve and purchase the land from the Department of Resources. If an offer is accepted by the Department, the landowner is required to amalgamate the land with an existing parcel being Lot 3 on SP218449.

Report

The proposed permanent road closure applies to an unmade road that runs east-west between Kenilworth Street and Grove Avenue, Morgan Park. The road reserve does not contain any constructed road that is on Council's road register. It provides access to single neighbouring property. The approximate area of road reserve to be closed is 3,700m² and is a twenty-meter (20m) wide road reserve, with a ten-meter (10m) strip to be retained adjacent to lots 130 and 131 on RP31029.

Located on the northern side of the road reserve are three (3) privately owned parcels of land, including Lot 130 on RP31029, which is owned by Southern Downs Regional Council and contains a water reservoir. The applicant seeking to permanently close the road reserve is located to the south of the road reserve on a relatively small allotment being 3,783m². The allotment has road frontage on both Kenilworth Street and Grove Avenue.

If approved by the Department of Resources, the road reserve will be re-surveyed and included in Lot 3 as part of a single allotment, pursuant to the Act.

Internal assessment has been undertaken by Council officers. Officers are not supportive of the partial closure leaving a ten-meter (10m) road reserve to serve Lot 131 on RP31029.

The current Southern Downs Planning Scheme (v.5) does not specify minimum road reserve widths for development in the Industry zone. However, the Draft Southern Downs Planning Scheme (Planning Scheme Policy 3 – Engineering Standards Manual) outlines that for new roads

in the Industry zone, the minimum sealed width is between 12-14 metres, depending on vehicle movements. The Draft Scheme is not yet in effect, and the Planning Scheme Policy 3 – Engineering Standards Manual is currently on public notification and may be subject to change. The Draft Scheme (inclusive of the Planning Scheme Policy 3 – Engineering Standards Manual) is nearing adoption in the coming months.

There are Council water and wastewater assets within the road reserve, as shown in Figure 2, below.

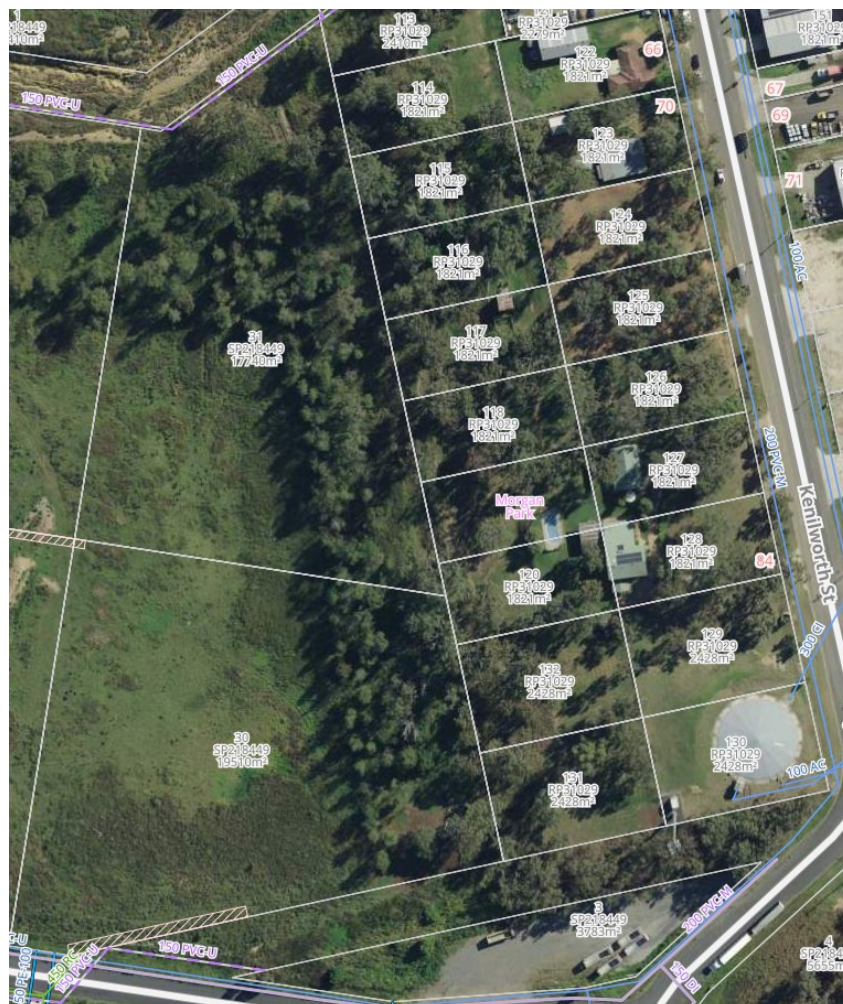


Figure 2

Any road closure needs to be subject to an easement sufficient to protect Council's interests.

The residual land will only be for the benefit of Lot 131 RP31029. Essentially, it becomes a driveway servicing 1 lot. The reduced road reserve area will be of little to no benefit to the community or Council.

Officers note that there are seven (7) other lots adjacent to Lot 131 RP31029 that do not have any road reserve frontage, as shown in Figure 2, above.

Officers remain supportive of a full closure, subject to an access easement between the applicant and the owners of Lot 131 on RP31029, and an easement sufficient to protect Council's interests in the water and wastewater assets. Alternatively, the proposed ten-meter (10m) section could be amalgamated with lot 131 RP31029 maintaining its access, with the proposal still subject to the easement in Council's favour for the water and wastewater assets.

Conclusion/Summary

The application to permanently close part of the road reserve between Kenilworth Street and Grove Avenue, Morgan Park and adjacent to Lot 3 on SP218449 is not supported.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this request. All costs are met by the applicant.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

A reduced risk exists with a decision to partially close the road reserve as Council will no longer manage the closed section but will retain obligations to maintain and manage the ten-meter (10m) road reserve.

Minimal risks exist with a decision to support full closure of the road reserve as it is based on legislation and supports the applicant's desire to increase land holdings.

Opportunity

Effective use of the land otherwise not in use.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Land and Road Use Working Group

Council Information Session 6 May 2026

External Consultation

No external consultation is conducted by Council. The Department of Resources is the decision-maker for the application. Council is deemed an interested party given its role as road manager and is not required to consult with landowners.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Council controls all roads in its local government area pursuant to section 60 of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

The application to permanently close a road is decided by the Minister pursuant to section 99(1) of the *Land Act 1994*. Only adjoining landowners or public utility providers can apply to permanently close a road.

Corporate Plan

Goal 3 Our Prosperity

Outcome: 3.3 The Southern Downs is a destination of choice for business and visitors.

Objective: 3.3.1 Establish a reputation for working collaboratively with developers to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes.

Goal 4 Our Performance

Outcome: 4.1 Our customers want to do business with us.

Objective: 4.1.1 Deliver contemporary customer service experiences that align with the expectations of our customers and the community

Policy / Strategy

Use of Roads Policy - PL-IS110. There are no conflicts with the roads policy.

Human Rights Policy PL-CS093

HUMAN RIGHTS

A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken. In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the Human Rights Policy PL-CS093 and the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019. It is considered that to the extent that the subject matter may limit or restrict any human rights, such restriction or limitation is reasonable in accordance with Councils Human Rights Policy PL-CS093.


ATTACHMENTS

Nil

14. INFRASTRUCTURE, ASSETS AND PROJECTS REPORTS

14.1 Stanthorpe Water Restrictions

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Manager Water	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. Approve the introduction of the modified water restrictions for Stanthorpe water supply as detailed in this report.
2. Approve that the water restrictions will currently only apply to Stanthorpe Water Supply.

REPORT

The Purpose

The purpose of this report is for Council to approve the modified water restrictions and other initiatives to be initially actioned for Stanthorpe water supply, in response to the recent period of low rainfall.

Background

The long-range forecast for May to July 2026 and beyond shows that rainfall is likely to be below average for the Southern Downs region, while daytime temperatures are likely to be above average. It is likely this will result in drought conditions and Council is committed to supporting the community to make every drop count.

As well as the work done to enable trucking of raw water from Connolly Dam, over the ensuing five years SDRC has undertaken a program of drought initiatives in partnership with the State Government including:

Full leak detection of Stanthorpe twice and repaired all leaks and faults found:

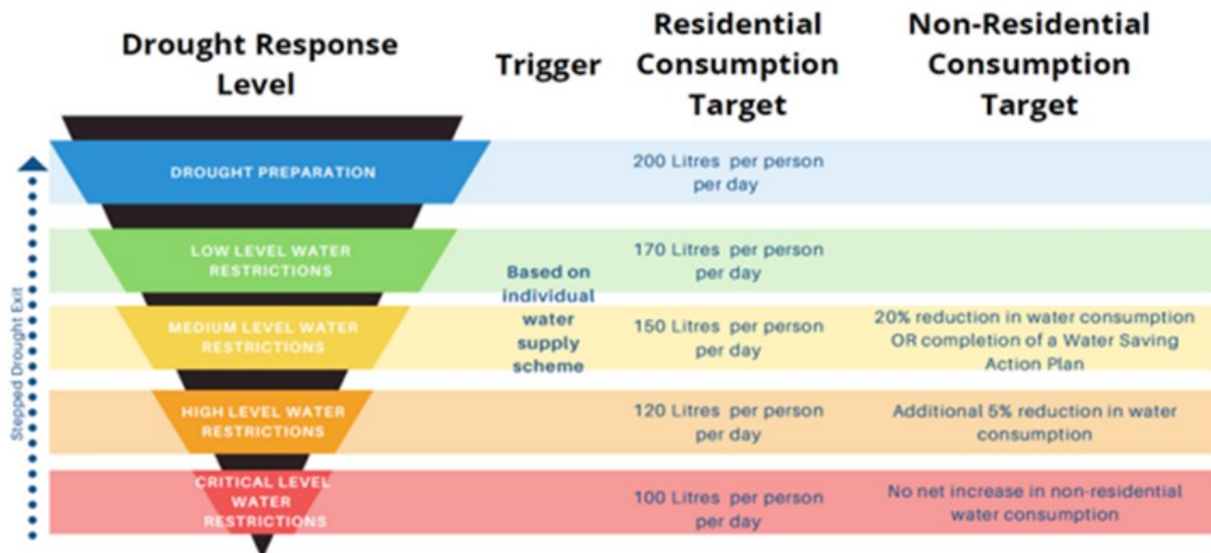
- Bought leak detection equipment and trained staff in the use.
- Worked with commercial/industrial users using over 10 ML/annum to keep their Water Efficiency Management Plans current.
- Begun assessment of users using over 5 ML/annum to potentially require WEMP's too.
- Followed up leaks identified in Aqualus to reduce losses.

- Provided a public Aqualus portal for customers to monitor their water usage.
- Created Demand Management Areas in Stanthorpe and in the process of creating these in other towns to more quickly identify leaks to try and repair these before we lose too much water.
- Monitoring the Stanthorpe DMAs to try and detect leaks early.
- Actively changing consumers to recycled water where possible.
- Reviewed pressures to try where possible to reduce the occurrence and severity of water leaks.
- Updated our Waterwise literature on our webpage and Comms are producing media to remind consumers of this.
- Actively promoting the shower head swap option.
- Council officers have been working with the State Government on a concept for water security for SDRC since the original announcement of the T2W solution in early 2021
- Including various initiatives under a \$8.14M funding package for Drought Resilience (still ongoing).
- Programmed works to renew/upgrade watermains that have high risk of breakage with large water losses.

Storm King Dam has had very little inflow recently and the dam level is trending downwards. It is currently at 70.1%.

Below are the current approved triggers in the Drought Management Plan:

Figure 6.1: Drought Response Triggers



Report

For this financial year, the daily average water consumption in Stanthorpe is currently 165L/person/day. This has increased when compared to the previous 2 years, which averaged 130L/person/day.

In the Drought Management Plan (DMP) low level water restrictions currently require an average water use of 150 litres per person per day as shown in the diagram above. This proposed drought trigger is shown in the diagram below with key changes being:

Stanthorpe Water Supply Scheme

Drought Response Trigger (Storm King Dam, % of Full Supply Volume)	Water Use Target	Minimum Time to Depletion	Additional Actions	Drought Exit Review Trigger
DROUGHT PREPARATION 85%	1.7 ML/day	15 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify Stanthorpe residents Check the level of Connolly Dam 	18 Months
LOW LEVEL WATER RESTRICTIONS 65%	1.4 ML/day	12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the asset condition associated with carting from Connolly Dam, including auxiliary infrastructure (reservoir tanker intake, WTP upgrade needs). 	15 Months
MEDIUM LEVEL WATER RESTRICTIONS 45%	1.2 ML/day	9 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase monitoring of raw water quality in Storm King Dam as storage levels decrease to determine whether additional treatment is required due to water quality deterioration Undertake early works to allow carting from Connolly Dam, including procurement process approvals and contractual arrangement. Investigate emergency supply options (carting from other dams if low water security is projected at Connolly Dam). 	12 Months

The following new actions are proposed for each level of restriction:

Low-level Restrictions –65% and below but above 46% (Target 150L/person/day)

- Existing water restrictions remain (October – April 6:00 AM – 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM).
- No sprinklers allowed - only handheld hoses or buckets.
- Vehicle washing permitted only if using a hand-held hose with trigger nozzle, high-pressure cleaner, watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.
- Cleaning of paved/concrete surfaces permitted only if using a hand-held hose with trigger nozzle, high-pressure cleaner, watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.
- Any person or entity using reticulated water from a mobile water tankers or standpipe are required to meet the water restrictions as specified above.
- Use of hoses and sprinklers for water play toys (slip'n'slides, fountains etc) prohibited.
- Water standpipes. – permitted up to 5,000 litres per week per property.*

Medium level Restrictions 45% and below but above 31% (Target 120L/person/day)

- Maintain the water restriction hours, but only allow use every alternate day.
- Topping up the swimming pool or spa by unattended hose permitted before 8am and after 6pm on alternate days, only if all available rainwater at the premises has been used first to top up the pool.
- Filling of new or repaired pools is only permitted with written permission from the Manager Water & Wastewater.
- Filling or topping up of child play pools is not permitted.
- Permitted to top up existing ponds up to their normal level if the pond is sustaining fish or bird life, and by watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap (less than 1000 litres only).
- Cleaning of paved/concrete surfaces permitted only if cleaning is a result of or to avoid an accident, fire, health hazard or other emergency. Must use a hand-held hose with trigger nozzle, high-pressure cleaner, watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.
- Vehicle washing permitted only if using a watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.

- Water standpipes. – permitted up to 4,000 litres per week per property.*
- Mobile water tanker filling only permitted if supplying water for either use inside a premises, specified building works, for firefighting, or stock watering purposes, and with the written permission of the SDRC.
- Any person or entity using reticulated water from a mobile water tanker or standpipe is required to meet the water restrictions as specified above.
- Non-residential entities to aim for 20% reduction in use
- Watering of grass is not permitted

High level Restrictions 30% and below but above 21% (Target 100L/person/day)

- Watering gardens by watering can or bucket filled from a tap, permitted for a maximum of one hour per day, before 8am and after 6 pm on alternate days.
- Topping up swimming pool or spa utilising the potable water supply is not permitted.
- Permitted to top up existing ponds up to their normal level if the pond is sustaining fish or bird life and by watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.
- Cleaning of paved/concrete surfaces permitted only if cleaning as a result of or to avoid an accident, fire, health hazard or other emergency. Must use hand-held hose with trigger nozzle, high-pressure cleaner, watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.
- Vehicle washing permitted only if using a watering can or bucket filled directly from a tap.
- Mobile water tanker filling only permitted if supplying water for either use inside a premises, specified building works, or stock watering purposes, and with the written permission of the SDRC and may be restricted.
- Water standpipes. – permitted up to 3,000 litres per week per property.*
- Watering of public gardens not permitted unless with the written approval of the water service provider.
- Further restricted potable use for green areas such as parks as determined by Council.
- Non-residential entities to aim for an additional 5% reduction in use.

*Note * Larger amounts can be approved by Manager Water & Wastewater based on families with more than 5 people living on a property.*

The following media actions are also proposed:

Communications - Low-Level Restrictions

- Target 150 L per person per day.
- Introduce the water wheel, showing average usage for certain activities.
- Provide regular information on dam levels.
- Actively promote the shower head and sprinkler exchange program.
- Continue to adjust the Water Restrictions signs at the entrances to Stanthorpe.
- Identify and issue advice to residential premises using more than 1,000 litres per premise per day to encourage waterwise practices.
- Liaise with businesses with high water use to encourage reduction. Any businesses with higher usage than 5ML per year require a Water Efficiency Management Plan (WEMP) to be prepared.

Communications - Medium-Level Restrictions

- Target 120 L per person per day.
- Continue with general media releases and information sharing.
- Provide regular information on dam levels.
- Provide information on average usage by town.

Communications - High-Level Restrictions

- Target 100 L per person per day.
- Continue with general media releases and information sharing.
- Provide regular information on dam levels.
- Provide information on average usage by town.

Conclusion/Summary

The trigger for Stanthorpe water in the DMP has been met and the modified restrictions should be introduced as per this report. Only Stanthorpe water supply is currently triggering a DMP response and therefore only Stanthorpe should have restrictions introduced.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The water restrictions will result in reduced revenue.

Estimated reduction in revenue has been discussed with SDRC finance team.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

If these new water restrictions are not introduced, the water will deplete from Storm King Dam quicker than anticipated.

Opportunity

There is an opportunity to reduce the water usage and stretching further the current water available in Storm King Dam.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Extensive consultation with the SDRC staff.
Council Information Session on 6 May 2026.

External Consultation

Department of Local Government, Water & Volunteers on SDRC drought preparations.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

The Water Supply (Safety & Reliability) Act 2008 provides Council the authority to introduce water restrictions.

Corporate Plan

Goal 2 Our Places

Outcome: 2.2 Public places, services and facilities are accessible, sustainable and cost effective.

Objective: 2.2.2 Develop and implement water security programs and strategies to ensure a sustainable and reliable water supply for all towns.

Policy / Strategy

The Drought Management Plan sets out the trigger levels to be followed and the actions to be taken. The new water restriction triggers bring forward the restrictions.

Legal

There is to be no legal issues associated with this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS


A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

14.2 Amendment to PL- IS092 Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer: Manager Assets, Spatial and Projects	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	ECM Function No/s:	

Recommendation

THAT Council resolves to endorse proposed amendments to PL – IS092 Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy.

REPORT

The Purpose

The purpose of this request is to modify Infrastructure and public place Naming to allow for a more efficient process and reduce the administrative burden on Officers.

Background

To improve the process for Council a request has been made to remove requirements for Ordinary Council Meeting Resolution for permission to engage the community. This change has been requested to improve the efficiency of the policy while maintaining the governance of the process. This change will reduce the requirement for two Ordinary Council Meeting (OCM) reports and the associated approvals down to one OCM process.

The changes are:

1. Deleting policy clause 4.7 point 3 of PL – IS092 Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy.
2. Replacing policy clause 4.7 point 3 of PL – IS092 Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy to reflect that officers will provide a briefing to Councillors prior to the community engagement process to ensure Councillors are fully informed of the naming proposal.
3. Adding clause 4.8 of PL-IS092 Alternate Names Register
4. Minor edits to Policy.

Report

To reduce the time taken to complete any naming exercises where a naming exercise will take a minimum of 3 Ordinary Council Meeting cycles, Officers are recommending the amendment of Policy named PL – IS092 Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy.

Officers will provide briefing materials to Councillors prior to an engagement exercise via Councilor Information Sessions (CIS) before the names are put to the Community.

Clause 4.7 point 3 of the policy is:

“If there is a proposed name/s in accordance with the Policy then a report will be presented to Council putting forward a proposed name (based on the applicable criteria) to go out for official public consultation.”

The removal of this clause does not change the process. The removal reduces the number of Ordinary Council Meeting Resolutions required for a naming exercise.

Additon of Clause 4.8 Alternate Name Resister is stipulating the requirement to maintain a register of alternate names that Council Officers can use as a repository for alternate names.

Conclusion/Summary

This change will reduce the workload on Officers while retaining the integrity of the Policy outcomes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Reduce Council and Staff time to engage with community on road naming.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

If this report is not approved, then the existing 2 step process will remain.

Opportunity

If approved, then there will be increased efficiency for engagement with community on road naming.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Chief Executive Officer
General Manager Infrastructure, Assets and Projects
Manager Governance
Councilor Information Session 22 April 2026

External Consultation

Nil

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Local Government Act S60 (c) and (d).

Corporate Plan

Goal 4 Our Performance

Outcome: 4.4 Council has embedded risk management, good governance, transparency and accountability into what we do.

Objective: 4.4.3 Our asset management is smart, effective and efficient with robust project selection pathways.

Policy / Strategy

PL – IS092 Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy

Legal

There appears to be no legal issues associated with this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS

A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Policy PL-IS092 with amendments [↓](#)



Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy

Policy Number:	PL-IS092
Department:	Infrastructure, Assets and Projects
Section:	Asset Management, Spatial & Saleyard
Responsible Manager:	Manager Asset Management, Spatial & Saleyard
Date Adopted:	xxxx
Date to be Reviewed:	June 2028
Date Reviewed:	April 2026
Date Rescinded:	

REVISION RECORD

Date	Version	Revision description
27/01/2021	0	Adopted by Council
15/05/2024	1	Reassignment of responsibility and change to naming functions
24/3/2026	2	Changes to procedural elements and biannual review

Infrastructure and Public Place Naming Policy

Policy no: *PL-IS092*

Updated: Adoption Date

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1 **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the naming or renaming of infrastructure (such as but not limited to roads, streets, parks, bridges, pathways, and other assets) and public places within the jurisdiction of Southern Downs Regional Council (Council).

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a consistent policy for naming or renaming.
- To increase the use of names which have a locally relevant historical, flora or fauna theme.
- To provide staff, community and developers with clear information on Council's requirements for the naming or renaming.

2 **Scope**

This policy applies to the naming or the renaming of infrastructure, land or public place¹ for which Council is the custodian.

This policy does not apply to:

- Towns, geographic communities and village names; or,
- Roads and bridges under State Government control.

3 **Legislative Context**

Local Government Act 2009

Human Rights Act 2019

4 **Policy Details**

4.1 **Common principles for naming**

4.1.1 **A proposed name must adhere to one or more of the following principles:**

- a. Be appropriate to the local, indigenous, geographical, environmental or physical character;
- b. Be of verifiable historical or cultural significance;
- c. Relate to the local flora, fauna, landscape;
- d. Be named after a benefactor, eminent person, pioneer or long-term land holder of verifiable significance;

4.1.2 **A proposed name must:**

- a. Be unique in nature;
- b. Be sensitive to diverse cultures and in accordance with community standards and values;

¹ Local Government Act 2009, Section 125 (5)

- c. Contain less than 35 characters;
- d. Be concise and easy to pronounce;
- e. Be spelt using contemporary Australian English;
- f. Be the correct spelling; and,
- g. Be referred to and approved by the relevant traditional owners/custodians of the land on which the asset is located if the name is indigenous in origin or of indigenous cultural significance.

4.1.3 A proposed name must not:

- a) Be a duplication of another name
- b) Have significant similarity to an existing name;
- c) Generally contain abbreviations;
- d) Cause confusion;
- e) Be offensive or likely to give offence;
- f) Be interpreted as advertising for a commercial or industrial enterprise.

4.1.4 A proposed name must conform to the requirements of:

- a. This policy;
- b. Any other relevant Council policies;
- c. Department of Transport and Main Roads' Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices; and,
- d. Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 4819:2011 Rural and Urban Addressing Section 4.

4.1.5 Council reserves the right to:

- a. Adopt or decline any name proposed by an individual, group, or organisation;
- b. Adopt an alternative name

4.2 Naming/renaming of roads and bridges

A road may be named or renamed as a result of one of the following circumstances:

- Change of name for an existing road;
- Previously unnamed road; or
- Road extension.

A road name will be defined by the area of the formed road. Unformed roads will not be named except in exceptional circumstances. Officers will assign the Road Type using the definitions defined by AS/NZS 4819:2011 4.3 Road Name Components - Road Type.

For renaming of roads, where a road crosses a Council boundary, consultation will be held with the relevant boundary Council.

Wherever practicable, roads will have a single and unique name and be continuous from the designated start to the designated end of the road asset, irrespective of Council boundaries, terrain and intersecting roads.

Road names are intended to be enduring, and should only be changed if and where necessary.

4.3 Naming of road in new subdivisions

Proponents should propose three (3) suggested names, in order of preference and including a reason for the preferred names with demonstration of adherence to the requirements of this policy, for each road within the new subdivision at the time of submitting their Operational Works Application.

4.4 Naming/renaming of parks and infrastructure within a park

The primary purpose of a park is for recreation, not as a memorial, and naming after persons will only be considered under circumstances relating to benefaction or bequest; or where there has been substantial and verifiable community contribution made to the local community by the nominated person and there is broad and extensive community support.

A park may be named or renamed as a result of one of the following circumstances:

- Change of name for a previously unnamed or default named park; or,
- Overwhelming and verifiable change in community attitude and support.

Park names should be unique within the locality and have general appeal and relevance to the community in which they are located. Parks shouldn't have the same name as other parks within the region and if existing, should be distinguished additionally by their location.

4.5 Request for naming or Renaming of an Infrastructure Asset

Renaming is discouraged however an infrastructure asset may be renamed under special circumstances with the below elements being considered to assist Council's decision:

- The person or body or entity after which the infrastructure asset was named has been discredited or dishonoured;
- There is strong community desire for the name change;
- The name is duplicated elsewhere in the MRC area;
- It is found that the information submitted regarding the naming of the infrastructure asset is factually incorrect; or
- The name does not comply with AS/NZS 4819.2011 Rural and Urban Addressing.

4.6 Submitting a request to Council

All requests relating to the naming of an asset must be submitted to Council in writing or on the relevant application form. Requests should contain all relevant details, including supporting documentation, background for the request and contact details for the applicant.

4.7 Assessment of a request

Upon receipt of a request Council officers will undertake the following assessment process:

1. An analysis will be made of the request.
2. If none of the proposed names are in accordance with the Policy, the application will not be approved and the applicant advised accordingly.
3. Where a name is proposed in accordance with the Policy, Officers will provide a brief to Council aligned to the community engagement process to inform Councillors of the naming proposal.
4. The proposed name(s) will then be available for public comment for a minimum period of 21 calendar days and shall include:
 - a) Advertising in the relevant media;
 - b) Written advice to all adjacent landholders;
 - c) Written advice to any other stakeholders for input; and
 - d) Input from internal departments.
5. After the end of the consultation period, a report will be prepared for submission to the next available Council meeting. The report shall advise of the details of the application, together with any correspondence received. At this meeting a suitable name should be adopted based on both the applicable criteria and the outcomes of the public consultation.
6. The applicant and relevant stakeholders will be advised of the outcome.

4.8 Alternate Name Register

Officers will maintain a register of proposed names not allocated that do meet the Policy requirements. This register will be consulted to provide names where no proposed name meets Policy requirements.

4.9 Adoption of new name

After adoption of the new name, correspondence will be forwarded to the applicant, any respondents, adjacent landholders and stakeholders advising of the decision.

All relevant departments, including but not limited to, the Department of Resources, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Telstra, Ergon Energy and Australia Post are to also be advised of any road or place name changes.

5 Related Documents

Nil.


6 References

AS/NZS 4819-2011 Rural and Urban Addressing

15. COMMUNITIES, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES REPORTS

15.1 Pest Management Advisory Committee Meeting

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Manager Environmental Services	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council receive the Minutes of the Pest Management Advisory Committee meeting held in Warwick on Thursday, 26 March 2026.

REPORT

Background

The Pest Management Advisory Committee (PMAC) met in Warwick on Thursday 26 March 2026.

Report

The minutes of Council's Pest Management Advisory Committee are submitted for Council's information and consideration of any recommendation/s following each meeting. The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026 are attached (Attachment 1). The Southern Downs Regional Council Pest Management Officers Report (Attachment 2) presented at the meeting is also provided.

At this meeting, there was a presentation from Moises Vasquez, Senior Engagement Officer, and Kathrine Montafia, from the National Fire Ant Eradication Program. The officers provided an informative presentation on the potential impacts of fire ants and the work being undertaken by the National Fire Ant Eradication Program, to help raise awareness of the biosecurity threat to committee members.

Conclusion/Summary

That Council receive the Minutes from the Pest Management Advisory Committee meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

Council has legislative obligations under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, and there is a risk of non-compliance if Council does not fulfil its responsibilities.

Opportunity

The Pest Management Advisory Committee is a community consultative committee and allows Council to receive contributions from the community on its pest management activities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Nil

External Consultation

The Pest Management Advisory Committee is a community consultative committee.

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Biosecurity Act 2014

Corporate Plan

Goal 2 Our Places

Outcome: 2.3 Our natural and agricultural environments are healthy, resilient and sustainable.

Objective: 2.3.3 Develop policies and implement measures to enhance our agricultural sector and protect priority agricultural land from invasive pest animals and pest plants and non-rural development incursion.

Policy / Strategy

Southern Downs Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2031

Southern Downs Invasive Pests Strategic Plan 2021-2024

ATTACHMENTS

1. Minutes of Pest Management Advisory Committee meeting 26 March 2026 [↓](#)
2. Officers Report - PMAC 26 March 2026 [↓](#)



MINUTES OF THE SOUTHERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE PEST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 26 MARCH 2026 AT 2:00PM

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 64 FITZROY STREET, WARWICK

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PEST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES | THURSDAY 26 MARCH 2026 AT 2:00PM



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1 PRESENT

Clive Smith (Southern Downs Wild Dog Management Advisory Committee), Liz Bourne (Community member), Paul Maher (Community member), Ken McCray (Transport & Main Roads), Nicki Lewis (Dept Primary Industries), Mat Warren (Darling Downs Moreton Rabbit Board), Shannon Partridge (SDRC Environmental Compliance), Joss Kresina (Acting Local Laws Coordinator), Jenny Watt (Minute Taker).

Via Teams: Cr Carla Pidgeon (Chairperson), Nicole Collett (SDRC Manager Environmental Services), Dusty Elson (Granite Border Landcare), Andrew McCartney (SQL), Andrew Greenwood (Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service), Moises Vasquez (Senior Engagement Officer, National Fire Ant Eradication Program), Katherine Montafia (National Fire Ant Eradication Program)

Cr Pidgeon opened the meeting at 2:00pm, introduced herself and welcomed all those attending both in person and on "Teams".

2 APOLOGIES

Greg Keith (Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service), Carol Booth (Invasive Species Council), Cr Cynthia McDonald, Angus Ferrier (Granite Belt Growers), Andrew Packer (Dept Environment, Tourism, Science & Innovation), Ted Vinson (Dept Primary Industries)

3 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

a) Review of Previous Actions

Action: Angus to request information/statistics from Granite Belt Growers on the impact of pigs and deer in the region. –ANGUS UNAVAILABLE – FOLLOW UP NEXT MEETING

4 SDRC PEST MANAGEMENT OFFICERS ACTIVITY REPORT – SHANNON PARTRIDGE

Shannon presented the SDRC Report (a copy of the report had been forwarded to members by email prior to the meeting)

5 PRESENTATION FROM MOISES VASQUEZ - SENIOR ENGAGEMENT OFFICER, NATIONAL FIRE ANT ERADICATION PROGRAM

Moises Vasquez along with Kathrine Montafia from the Fire Ant Eradication Program provided a presentation to the meeting attendees. At the end of the presentation, they thanked members for the opportunity and allowed for any questions.

6 UPDATE BY MEMBERS GROUPS

Each of the attending members provided an update from the group they represent.

7 GENERAL BUSINESS

a) Cr Pidgeon thanked Moises Vasquez and Kathrine Montafia for their time and excellent presentation.

8 NEXT MEETING & CLOSURE

Next meeting: Thursday 25 June 2026 @ 10:00am at Stanthorpe Council Chambers

Following meeting: 17 September 2026 (to be confirmed)

Meeting Closed at 3:15pm



SOUTHERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL PEST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING – 26 MARCH 2026

PEST MANAGEMENT REPORT – SHANNON PARTRIDGE

Roadside Treatment and Private Property Inspections

Seasonal growth has driven significant activity through the warmer months, with officers allocating resources based on mapped infestations, customer requests, and known high-risk corridors.

The roadside weed treatment focus for the summer months has been on Blackberry, Ragweed and ongoing treatment and surveillance of Mother of Millions. The team has also continued to monitor and treat Harrisia Cactus in the Leyburn and Karara areas and Chilean Needle Grass in areas along Leyburn-Cunningham Rd, Sandy Ck Rd, Warwick-Killarney Rd and O’Leary Rd.

The focus of the months leading up to Winter will be final treatment of Blackberry before the dormant Winter period and transitioning to increased treatment of, fireweed, firethorn and tree pear, prickly pear and privet. Additional privet has been treated at Sentimental Rocks and this area will be extended to Mount Marley when possible.

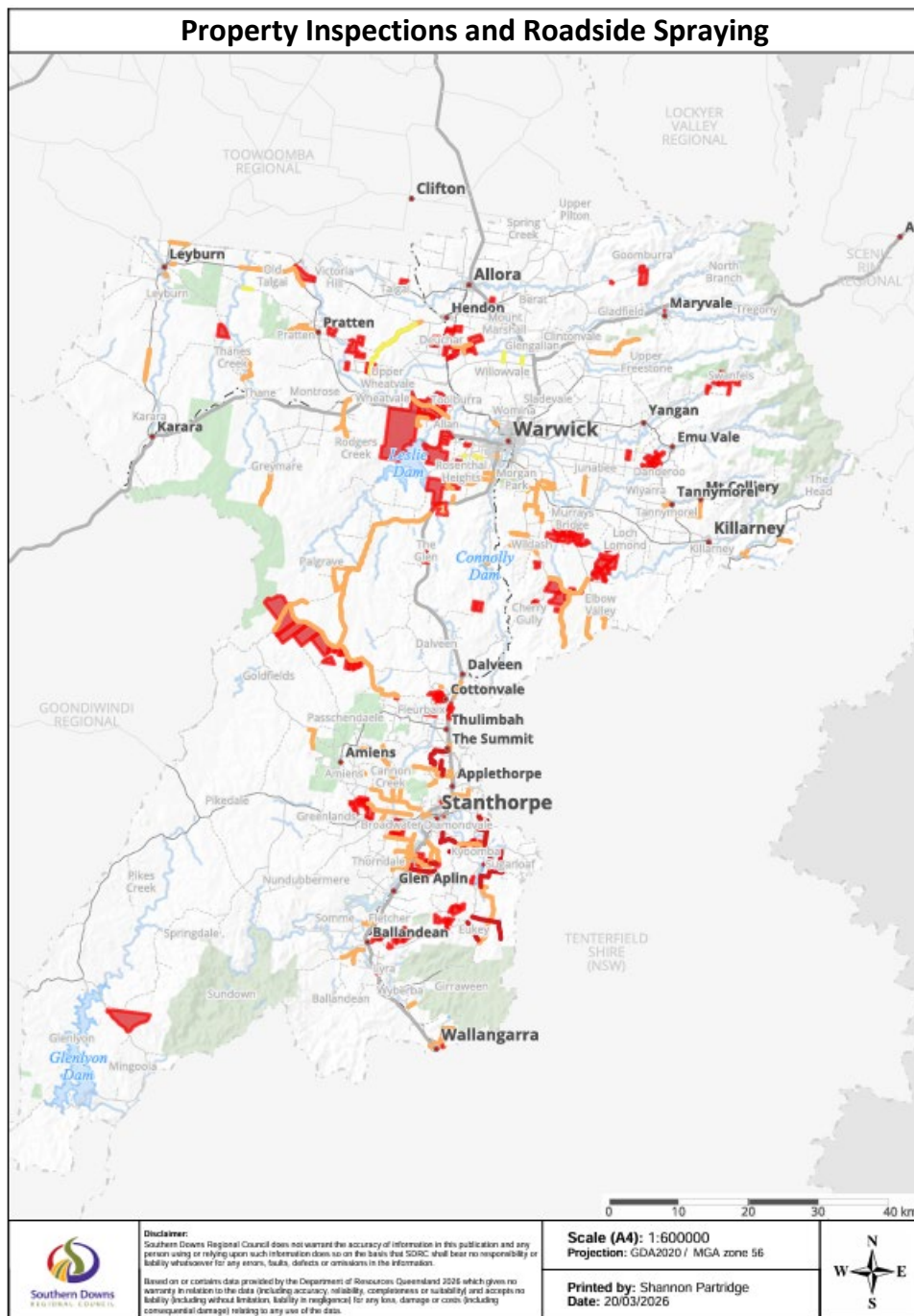
Demand for Council’s weed-control equipment, spray units and cactus injectors remains strong. Promotion during inspections has led to increased community uptake and positive operational feedback.

These units are being returned in good condition with local laws officers consistently ensuring maintenance is performed if necessary and inspection is clean on return.

GIS mapping of roadside treatment areas and property inspections is continuing with an increased number of roads treated in both regions. Reactive property inspections from customer enquiries have been prioritised and roadsides treated in these areas of concern, mainly Thulimbah and Thorndale areas.



Roadside Spraying Activity Map



Grey Willow

The suspected grey willow on the bank of Severn River, Seven Mile in the southern region has been investigated further in conjunction with Biosecurity Queensland. Leaf and branch samples were taken and taken to the Queensland Herbarium for assessment.

Preliminary identification has been undertaken however confirmation will require observation during the next flowering period. Further inspection is planned for late August to September to allow accurate identification.

Bunny Ears Cactus Removal – Woods Street Warwick

Following positive identification of Bunny Ears Cactus (*Opuntia Microdasys*) on Woods Street, the cactus was removed from the property in February 2026 with assistance from Biosecurity Queensland officers. Monthly monitoring has been conducted since removal to check for any regrowth from remaining plant fragments. To date, no regrowth has been observed at the site. These emerging reports reinforce the importance of community vigilance and early-reporting pathways, enabling rapid response before new species become established.

Community Education

Feral Pig Forums

From February 24th to 26th a series of forums focusing on the impact and management of feral pigs were held in conjunction with Darling Downs - Southwest Queensland Coordinator John Scriven. Diverse feedback was received from various primary producers, Councilors and landholders regarding their current management practices and how Council and SWROQ can help to facilitate community engagement and involvement in baiting programs.

John conducted pig trapping demonstrations and explained the pre-feeding process in relation to the feral pig's behavior and habits. Local Laws Officers received positive feedback following these forums and multiple landholders have been in contact regarding ad hoc grain baiting for feral pigs and registering their interest for upcoming coordinated ground baiting sessions scheduled for late March.

Invasive Animal Control Programs and Activities

Wild Dog Bounty Program

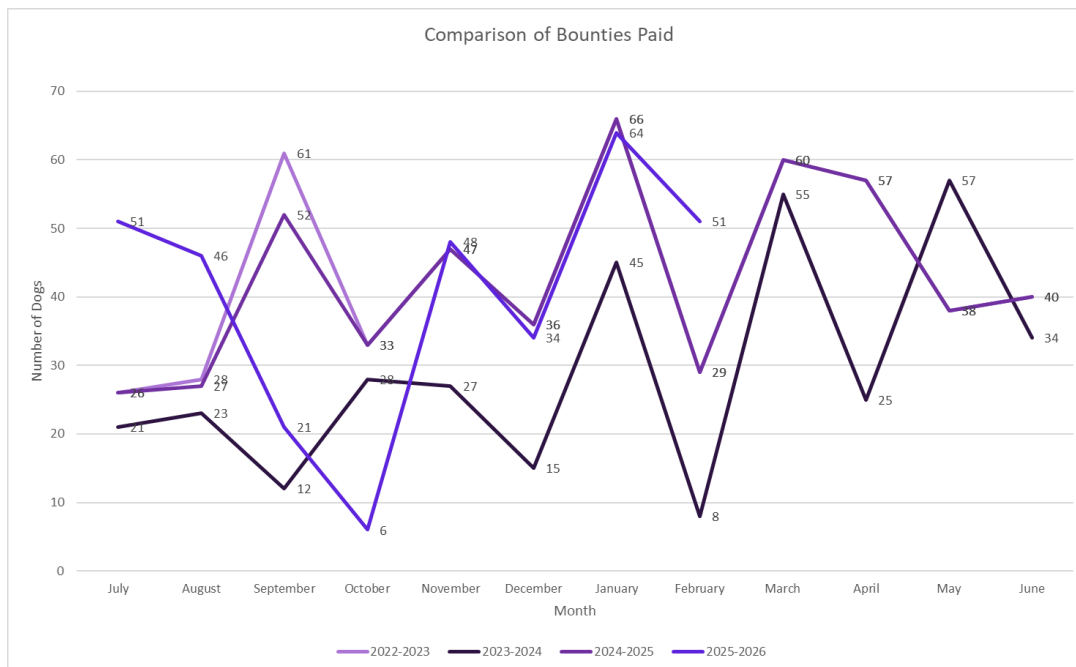
- December 2025, January 2026, February 2026: \$15,200
- 2025/26 YTD: \$35000

Animals Claimed (December 2025-February 2026)

Category	Number
Male adult dogs	190
Female adult dogs	145
Male pups	18
Female pups	12
Unknown pups	1
Unknown adults	0
Total	366

Program Insights

Adult dogs continue to dominate bounty claims, with a clear male bias consistent with regional trend data. January appears to be the peak operational month for dog bounty payments. Post holiday catch up of claims may affect this.



Coordinated Baiting and Aerial Baiting

The first round of coordinated baiting is currently in progress from March 24th to March 26th. The results of this round will be collated once completed and presented at the next meeting.

Aerial baiting has been scheduled for 2nd June to 3rd June 2026 and is currently in procurement stages. Participating landholders have been advised of these dates.

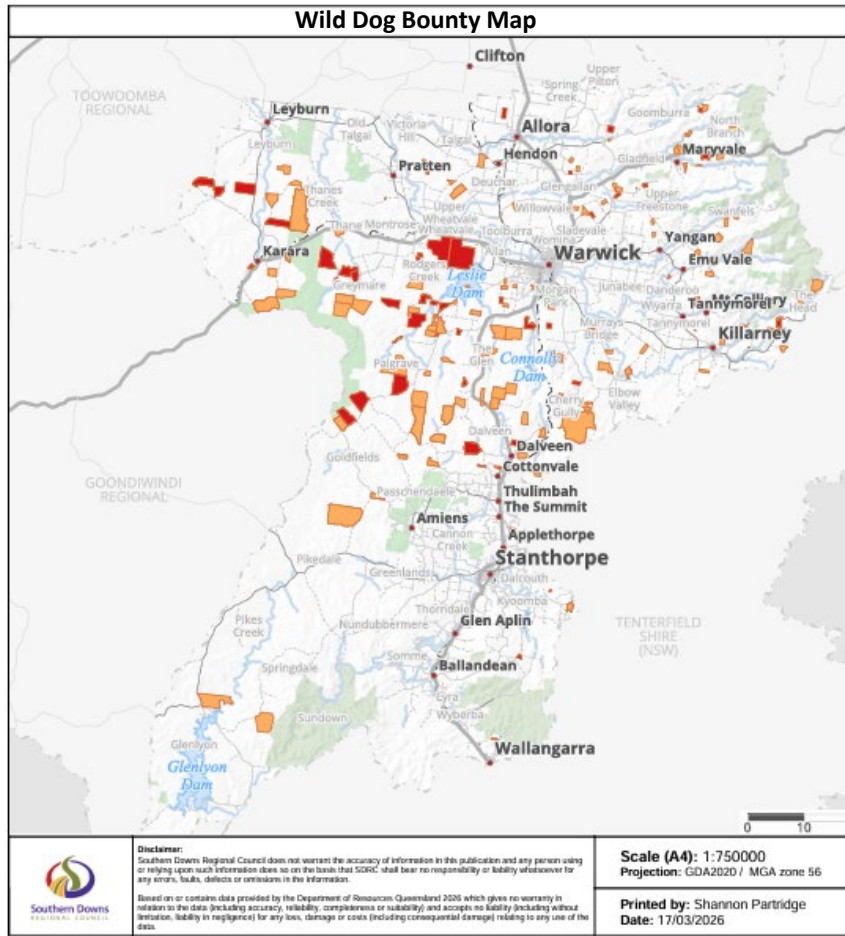
Introduction of FeralScan to Bounty Payment Policy

The Wild Dog Bounty Payment Policy was amended in November 2026 to incorporate the requirement of FeralScan - WildDogScan upload to receive bounty payment.

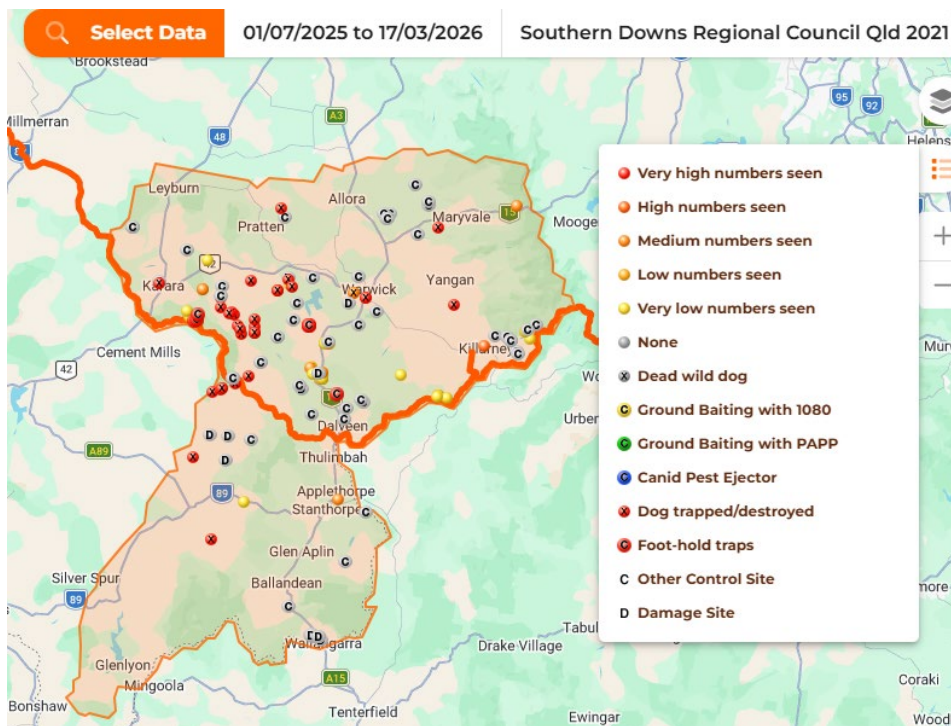
This amendment increases accountability, allows for more targeted management, community coordination of baiting programs and engagement.

Authorised bounty signatories have been informed of the changes during this transition period and provided with education materials on the use of the app. This information has also been presented at the Southern Downs Wild Dog Committee meeting in February 2026 and face-to-face meetings have taken place with members struggling with using the app.





Fencing Data – Southern Downs Region 01/07/2025 – 17/03/2026



5

Fencing Programs Maintenance Update

Summary of Repairs January and February

Total North: 37 repairs (including gate replacement)

Total Central: 44 repairs

Total South: 53 repairs

Ad Hoc: Gate replaced at Mount Janet Road in January as it was destroyed by a car. This was promptly replaced and officers are exploring the potential of mounting motion detection cameras in the area to monitor this behaviour if repeated.

Example of South Fence Before and After Repairs



Majority of repairs continue to be from trees falling and animal damage (feral, pigs, kangaroos) which is consistent with previous reports. Officers are aiming to patrol the fence quarterly to ensure these works are completed to an adequate standard and there are no significant structural issues that have not been reported.

Mount Janet Road Gate Before and After Repair



SRLOG Meeting in Surat

From 9th-11th March 2026, representatives from the Local Laws Pest Management Team attended the Southern Region Local Government Meeting in Surat, Queensland, hosted by Biosecurity Queensland and the Department of Primary Industries, alongside multiple regional Councils. The meeting provided valuable insights into current pest management practices, emerging biosecurity threats, and operational challenges across the region, including invasive species, vegetation management, stock route requirements, and feral pig control strategies.

Presentations highlighted new tools and technologies such as Queensland Globe and STA Logger systems to improve data collection and reporting, as well as the importance of plant identification and disease awareness. Key outcomes included the value of ongoing regional collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the opportunity to review new tools and approaches to strengthen local pest management, monitoring and response capabilities.

National Red Fire Ant Eradication Program Site Visit


On 16th March 2026, representatives from the SDRC Local Laws and Parks and Gardens teams attended a NFAEP field day and lab visit with neighbouring Councils, gaining practical insight into identification, behaviour and treatment of Red Imported Fire Ants. Although the region remains fire-ant free, nearby detections highlight increasing risk, particularly in disturbed areas like illegal dumping sites.

The visit reinforced the importance of proactive education, staff training and regional collaboration, with opportunities to partner with NFAEP to improve awareness, early detection and preparedness.



15.2 Southern Downs Youth Council Meeting - 26 March 2026

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Ordinary Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 27 May 2026
	Sport and Recreation Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council receive and note the minutes from the Southern Downs Youth Council Induction Day on 26 March 2026.

REPORT

Background

Southern Downs Youth Council (SDYC) has a role to represent the voice of young people who live, work, study or volunteer in the Southern Downs region, and provide input into Council activities and decisions.

The SDYC program aims to provide young people with opportunities to:

- develop a better understanding of the role and function of local government, our community and local issues;
- 'have a voice' - raise issues, exchange ideas, discuss community issues, provide input into Council planning, programs and services and influence local government decision-making processes; and
- have genuine and regular communication about issues that are important to them directly with the Council.

Report

On 26 March 2026, the Southern Downs Youth Council met at the Warwick Town Hall from 9.00am to 2.00pm.

This was the second meeting for the 2026 cohort and the students were presented with their Youth Council badges and vests. Following the badge presentation, parents/guardians were invited to stay for morning tea with the Councillors. The remainder of the meeting discussed the topics as outlined in the attached minutes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2025/2026 budget includes \$7,500 for Youth Development.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Risk

Southern Downs High Schools do not want to participate in the Youth Council Program.

Opportunity

SDYC Program is a conduit for input into Council activities and decisions from young people within the region.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Internal Consultation

Ordinary Council Meetings
Cr Harslett – Portfolio Councillor
Council Staff

External Consultation

Southern Downs High Schools

LEGAL / POLICY

Legislation / Local Law

Local Government Act 2009

Corporate Plan

Goal 1 Our People

Outcome: 1.1 Communities trust us to engage with them and advocate on their behalf.

Objective: 1.1.2 Implement effective and genuine community consultation processes that enable participation, engagement and collaboration.

1.1.3 Build confidence in our communities by being visible, empathetic and by actively listening.

Policy / Strategy

PL-CS077 – Southern Downs Youth Policy

Legal

There appears to be no legal issues associated with this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS

A Human Rights assessment has been undertaken.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Southern Downs Youth Council Minutes - 26 March 2026



SOUTHERN DOWNS YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES

26 MARCH 2026

WARWICK TOWN HALL



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1 PRESENT

Allora P-10 State School – Caitlyn Hoey and Sophie Masters
Assumption College Warwick – Amber Petersen, Lachlan Kajewski and Rose Walsh
Killarney P-10 State School – Ella-Louise Galloway and Leroy Brown
Scots PGC – Benn Hunter and Charlotte Stevens
School of Total Education (SOTE) – Tucker Sullivan and Carmella Jones
Stanthorpe State High School – David Moss and Vanilia Eunson
St Joseph's School – Kayleb Spiller and Margaret O'Dea
Warwick Christian College – Abigail Geraghy, Luca McKenzie and Matthew Hinkley
Warwick State High School – Liam Wren and Sophie Day

Southern Downs Regional Council – Sue Organ (Minute Secretary)

Southern Downs Regional Council – Deputy Mayor, Cr Sheryl Windle
Southern Downs Regional Council – Cr Morwenna Harslett

Observers:

Warwick State High School – Leanne Waples
Stanthorpe State High School – Jen McCarthy
Assumption College Warwick – Brett Hay

2 APOLOGIES

Southern Downs Regional Council – Mayor Melissa Hamilton
Southern Downs Regional Council – Cr Russell Wantling
Southern Downs Regional Council – Maggi Stanley (Manager of Community & Customer Services)

3 BADGE PRESENTATION

The Minute Secretary, Sue Organ welcomed the Youth Council students, parents/guardians and teachers to the Badge Ceremony Presentation and first official meeting. The traditional *original* custodians of the land were acknowledged.

Fire evacuation procedures, housekeeping and health and safety processes were also presented.

The Deputy Mayor read out a message from the Mayor who was an apology for the Badge Presentation.

Following the Mayors message the Deputy Mayor and Cr Harslett presented each Youth Council member with their name badge, a lanyard and puffer vest.

The meeting adjourned after the Badge Presentation at 10:05am for morning tea with Councillors, students, teachers and parents/guardians.

The meeting resumed at 10:30am.

Cr Harslett presented the 'Tiers of Government' to the students and ran an exercise around Federal, State and Local Government spending. Cr Windle provided background information on the Youth Council from previous years.

Peer Power Session 1

Local Youth Issues – Discussion

The Youth Council at their Induction Day on 26 February 2026 were asked to list the issues important to them within the Southern Downs region. The below list was identified and then during Session 1 they were asked to prioritise the list. The items underlined were seen as priorities and the students worked in groups to discuss in greater detail:

1. Want more outside interactions – not online
2. More involvement in the community (more events)
3. Walking from school – pathways not big enough (better walkways)
4. Bats in the park are destroying the trees
5. Destruction of property and littering
6. More benches in the parks
7. Public Safety at night
8. Target advertising more to young people not parents (kid friendly targeted advertising)
9. More ways for young people to engage with older people
10. Road conditions better for young people learning to drive
11. More social events
12. Mental health opportunities to talk to other people
13. More activities outside of school for better health
14. Finding alternative coping mechanisms for mental health
15. Outside of school activities other than sport
16. Giving back to the community and charities
17. More education on waste / environmental issues

Law of Diffusion

Peer Power went through the Law of Diffusion Diagram and percentages with the students:

- Innovators – 2.5%
- Early Adopters - 13.5%
- Early Majority - 34%
- Late Majority - 34%
- Loud Laggards - 16%

The meeting adjourned at 12.10pm for lunch and resumed at 12.35pm.

After lunch the students went into the **Parachute Exercise** which required them to have:

- a common goal
- both leaders and listeners in the group
- clear instructions
- teamwork – must see from another’s point of view
- decision making skills – how do we decide?

Exercise showed:

- Miscommunication
- Anarchy
- Some people gave up
- Some people saw success
- Interruptions were heightened

Summary

The Youth Council members were asked to remember the Parachute Exercise when they commence work in their groups on their Project Plans at the next meeting.

The students were thanked for their input and asked to complete a Project Plan Outline for their top two project priorities and email them back to Sue Organ by 7 May 2026. They were asked to think specifically about what is the benefit of their project, what is the cost, what are the risks (not just safety risks) and how will the project be delivered.

Finally, the students were reminded that they will be invited to Council Civic Events over the coming months, including the Warwick Safe Haven's Peace Walk and Candle Lighting Ceremony and Southern Downs Citizenship Ceremonies.

The students were given posters on 'WarwickCon' which is being held on Wednesday, 8 April 2026 from 1pm to 6pm at WIRAC as a Youth Week event. They were encouraged to pass the information on to their schools, friends, and peers prior to the Easter school holidays.

4 NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 14 May 2026 at the Stanthorpe Civic Centre Supper Room from 9.30am to 2.00pm.

5 CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 2.00pm.



16. REPORTS OF DEPUTATION OR CONFERENCE & REPORTS FROM DELEGATES APPOINTED BY COUNCIL TO OTHER BODIES

Nil

17. CONSIDERATION OF CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS ITEMS

Nil

18. GENERAL BUSINESS