

# Rural Roads Management Policy

Local Government Act 2009

## 1. Policy Statement

Townsville City Council (Council) will prioritise expenditure on the maintenance of rural roads having regard to the level of public use and function of each road.

## 2. Principles

Council seeks to maximise public access to all parts of the city while maintaining rural roads in a financially sustainable way that is appropriate to the level and nature of the use of the rural road.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all rural roads, both sealed and unsealed, in the Townsville local government area.

## 4. Responsibility

The Director Infrastructure & Operations, General Manager Engineering and Asset Infrastructure Planning and General Manager Construction, Maintenance and Operations are responsible for ensuring that this policy is understood and adhered to.

## 5. Definitions

**Disaster** - means a serious disruption in a community, caused by the impact of an event that requires a significant coordinated response by the State and other entities to help the community to recover from the disruption as defined in section 13 of the *Queensland Disaster Management Act 2003* (DM Act).

**Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)** - outline the agreed Australian Government and state government cost-sharing arrangements that may be activated following an eligible disaster to provide assistance to impacted community members, small businesses, not-for-profit organisations, primary producers, local councils and state government agencies.

**Event** - means any of the following:

- (a) a cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm, storm tide, tornado, tsunami, volcanic eruption or other natural happening;
- (b) bushfire;
- (c) an explosion or fire, a chemical, fuel or oil spill or a gas leak;
- (d) an infestation, plaque or epidemic;

- (e) a failure of, or disruption to, an essential service or infrastructure;
- (f) an attack against the State; or
- (g) another event similar to an event mentioned above.

An 'event' may be natural or caused by human acts or omissions (as noted in Section 16 (1) and 16(2) of the DM Act).

**Public Use** - means the use of a road by persons other than those gaining access to properties that they own or that they work upon.

**Road Reserve** - means an area of land under Council's control, dedicated, notified or declared to be a road for public uses. An area may be a road reserve even though it does not need to contain a formed road. The road reserve extends from the property boundary on one side to the property boundary on the other side.

**Rural Road** - A rural road is generally a low use road in rural zones of the Townsville local government area. It may be an unsealed road, or a narrow sealed road with gravel shoulders.

A rural road that is maintained by Council has been accepted onto the asset register. In some cases rural roads are not within road reserves, but in no case will Council accept responsibility for creating or maintaining a rural road that is upon private land unless Council has in writing committed to do so because Council regards that as being in the public interest.

**Serious Disruption** - means loss of human life or illness or injury to humans; or widespread or severe property loss or damage; or widespread or severe damage to the environment as defined in section 13(2) of the DM Act.

**Unsealed Road** - Unsealed roads are primarily located in sparsely developed areas and are usually a formed road with a gravel surface.

## 6. Policy

### 6.1. Rural Road Maintenance

Council undertakes annual condition assessments across the rural road network to determine the level of work required over the next 12 months.

For unsealed roads, required works may consist of grading, resheeting (addition of more gravel), or reprofiling the road to assist in drainage on or beside the road.

For sealed rural roads, works may consist of patching or resealing sealed sections, adding more gravel to the shoulder of the road or reprofiling adjacent drainage.

### 6.2. Unsealed Road Maintenance Standards

Unsealed road grading maintenance requirements are determined based on the road's condition, safety, volume and type of traffic, drainage and stormwater considerations. Council will schedule works to enable crews to operate in a geographically efficient and planned manner across the network. If urgent work is required due to poor road condition, a crew will be made available to address the works based on the risk profile of the defect. All decisions will be evidence-based to ensure optimal resource allocation and effective maintenance.

## 6.3. Fences, Gates and Other Access Restrictions over Roads

Rural roads should remain open to the public, and Council will only consider the closure of a road reserve or use of a gate or grid in extenuating circumstances. Council will assess applications for approvals to erect or maintain a fence or gate on a rural road by reviewing the use of the road for the general public and may cancel any approved restrictions over roads at any time.

Council will not accept that public access to a rural road should be restricted by a locked gate or a fence that is continuous across the road in order to:

- enhance privacy of a property accessed by that road; or,
- assist in the management of stock.

Council will not maintain roads that are restricted by fences or locked gates unless there are exceptional circumstances, generally relating to an ongoing high level of public use of the road.

## 6.4. Roadside Slashing

Slashing of roadsides is programmed across the network, with most roads slashed up to five times per year. Some lower use roads will be slashed less frequently, depending on use and considering the safety of road users.

Full width slashing (fence-line to fence-line) occurs prior to and after the wet season. Other programmed slashing will be up to two slasher widths.

Rain events may impact on this schedule, with early or late rains causing more growth, and making it difficult to slash through wet roadside areas. Council will reschedule the slashing program based on need and when it is safe to operate in these areas.

## 6.5. Disaster Events

Townsville is a dry tropics environment; however, the region is prone to events such as monsoons, cyclones and flooding in the wet season which may have a detrimental impact on the road network. In a disaster event, funding is available through the State and Federal Government Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), administered through the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) for the restoration of impacted roads.

To ensure DRFA requirements are met, after an event Council works closely with the QRA to make roads safe for use through the emergency works program. Full rehabilitation of roads to prior condition is a longer process and may take up to 18 months to two years to complete in order to ensure all funding requirements are met including approvals, inspections and reporting.

# 7. Legal Parameters

*Disaster Management Act 2003*

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Local Law No. 4 (Local Government Controlled Areas, Facilities and Roads) 2011*

*Local Law No.1 (Administration) 2011*

*Subordinate Local Law No. 1.16 (Gates and Grids) 2011*

## 8. Associated Documents

Application to take action on rural road

Disaster Management Policy

Queensland Disaster Funding Guidelines