

6.14. COUNTRY ROADS CONNECT GRANT NOMINATIONS

REPORT AUTHOR Project Engineer

MANAGER Acting Manager Infrastructure Planning & Delivery

DEPARTMENT Infrastructure Planning & Delivery

RECOMMENDATION

That Council retrospectively endorses the five projects;

- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 19.23-19.4km;
- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 20.59-20.9km;
- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 23.0-23.55km;
- Cape Tribulation Road, culvert upgrade at McKenzie Creek; and
- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 0.32-1.5km.

for submission under the Country Roads Connect program administered by the Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Queensland Government has released a \$100 million initiative, aimed at supporting local infrastructure that will deliver targeted investment to boost the safety of regional roads.

Funding is targeted at Local Roads of Regional Significance, which restricts Douglas Shire to the Cape Tribulation Road and Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road.

Five project sites have been identified and included in the submission, targeting sites which require significant ongoing maintenance and pose a risk to road users.

The value of submissions totals \$9.042m with 100% of the funding coming from the Country Roads Connect Program.

BACKGROUND

The Queensland Government has released a \$100 million initiative, aimed at supporting local infrastructure that will deliver targeted investment to boost the safety of regional roads. The Country Roads Connect (CRC) program provides 100% funding to local governments to pave regional unsealed roads which would otherwise become impassable during weather events. Project nominations on local roads are limited to Local Roads of Regional Significance.

Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) will administer the CRC program, in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development.

Projects on the local government-controlled road network are fully state funded (100%) with no co-contribution required from local governments. Funding will be provided over four years (2024-25 to 2027-28). Projects can be delivered over multiple years, with funding allocated accordingly.

The scope of works is focused primarily on road sealing projects. Priority will be given to road sealing projects on 'missing links' or where progressive sealing is able to be completed. Consideration of minor culvert works, and concrete ford crossings associated with road sealing projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis. There is no funding cap on the value of nominated projects.

COMMENTS

Infrastructure Planning and Delivery has nominated the following five projects under the CRC program:

- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to rigid concrete pavement Ch. 19.23-19.4km
- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to rigid concrete pavement Ch. 20.59-20.9km
- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to rigid concrete pavement Ch. 23.0-23.55km
- Cape Tribulation Road, culvert upgrade at McKenzie Creek
- Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to seal Ch. 0.32-1.5km

The nominations include costs for detailed design, construction, internal costs and 30-40% contingency.

The nominated rigid concrete pavement projects have also been submitted for Betterment funding by the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) team. Applying for both funding opportunities will enhance Council's chances of securing funding for these works. These projects were also requested by Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council and are a high priority for enhancing connectivity for their community.

Project nominations closed Friday 2 May 2025, following two extensions from the original deadline of Monday 31 March 2025. Councils are expected to be notified of the outcomes of their project nominations in June 2025.

PROPOSAL

That Council retrospectively endorses the five projects;

1. Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 19.23-19.4km;
2. Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 20.59-20.9km;
3. Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 23.0-23.55km;
4. Cape Tribulation Road, culvert upgrade at McKenzie Creek; and
5. Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, Ch. 0.32-1.5km.

for submission under the Country Roads Connect program administered by the Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The project nominations are for 100% funding distributed across three consecutive financial years, in accordance with the timings set by the CRC program.

The total project costs are broken down as follows:

Table 1: Proposed Funding

Proposed Funding	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	Total
Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to rigid concrete pavement Ch. 19.23-19.4km	\$100,000 (design)	\$916,900 (construction)	\$406,760 (contingency)	\$1,423,660
Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to rigid concrete pavement Ch. 20.59-20.9km	\$100,000 (design)	\$1,419,700 (construction)	\$607,880 (contingency)	\$2,127,580
Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to rigid concrete pavement Ch. 23.0-23.55km	\$100,000 (design)	\$700,000 (construction)	\$2,580,440 (construction & contingency)	\$3,380,440
Cape Tribulation Road, culvert upgrade at McKenzie Creek	\$50,000 (design)	\$627,000 (construction)	\$270,800 (contingency)	\$947,800
Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road, upgrade to seal Ch. 0.32-1.5km	\$80,000 (design)	\$814,300 (construction)	\$268,290 (contingency)	\$1,162,590
	\$430,000	\$4,477,900	\$4,134,170	\$9,042,070

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Without securing grant funding through the CRC program or Betterment, Council will not be in a financial position to deliver these projects in the near future.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Nil

Environmental: Reduces erosion and sediment issues on unsealed roads.

Social: Will improve the resilience and safety of the road and therefore improve connectivity.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 2 - Fostering Sustainable Economic Growth

A robust economy is at the heart of a thriving community and enables investment in environmental protection. While our remoteness is a key attribute, it also presents challenges for attracting new business and investment. We must also meet the challenges of fierce competition in the tourism sector. Council will partner with industry to build, diversify and promote the Douglas economy. Council will design and deliver infrastructure, strategies and services that support the local economy and businesses.

Goal 1 - We will build appropriate infrastructure and deliver services that connect and support businesses.

Operational Plan 2024-2025 Actions:

New project arisen during the financial year.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Service Provider Council provides many services to the community from roads and waste services to libraries and recreational facilities. Services evolve over time and it is the Council's mission to ensure that these services are appropriate, delivered efficiently, and designed with the customer at the centre.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Douglas Shire Council's Infrastructure Planning and Delivery team and DRFA team.

External: DTMR Principal Advisor and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. Country Roads Connect Program Guidelines March 2025 [6.14.1 - 15 pages]

Country Roads Connect

Program Guidelines

March 2025

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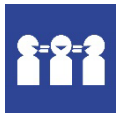
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Grants snapshot

Opening Date

11 March 2025

Closing date for submission of project nominations

31 March 2025

Program budget

\$100 million

Program type

Targeted competitive

Policy entity

Department of Transport and Main Roads and Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development (DNRMMRRD)

Administering entity

Department of Transport and Main Roads

Enquiries

Questions should be directed to:

Local Government Partnerships team

Policy, Planning and Investment

Department of Transport and Main Roads

RTA@tmr.qld.gov.au

Country Roads Connect Program Grants Process*

March

Program opens for nominations

Eligible councils will be invited to submit nominations

April

Assessment of nominations

TMR will check all nominations against the eligibility criteria and eligible nominations will be assessed by a multi-agency Assessment Panel with advice from technical assessors to inform the Panel's decisions.

May

TMR and DNRMMRRD will recommend projects for funding

The assessment panel will recommend projects to the Ministers.

May/June

Ministerial decision on projects to fund

The Ministers decide which nominations are successful.

June

Funding offers for successful nominees

Formal funding agreement entered into between State and councils.

2024-25 to 2027-2028

Delivery of projects

Successful nominees commence projects in allocated year and deliver according to agreed timeframe.

Ongoing

Evaluation of the Program

TMR will evaluate the specific project activity and the Program as a whole. TMR will base this on information provided by Program participants and collected from various sources.

**Exact timings to be confirmed*

Program overview

The Country Roads Connect (CRC) Program is a \$100 million Queensland Government election commitment aimed at improving resilience and safety in regional communities by sealing key regional access roads.

The Program will provide \$100 million over four years (2024-25 to 2027-28) targeting paving of unsealed regional roads that serve rural communities and producers, provide access for emergency vehicles and are most at risk of becoming impassable following severe weather events.

The CRC Program is part of the Right Plan for Queensland's Future to ease pressure on transport and insurance costs by investing money into regional roads, and boost safety and reduce transport costs by upgrading regional roads. The Program will work hand-in-hand with the Safer Roads, Better Transport plan which will deliver congestion-busting and safety upgrades across Queensland.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) will administer the CRC Program, in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development (DNRMMRRD).

Program objectives

The objectives of the CRC Program are to boost safety on regional roads whilst:

- Increasing the resilience of regional communities by improving the durability and reliability of regional road networks to withstand severe weather conditions.
- Maintaining productivity by ensuring that regional areas remain accessible for economic activities, thereby supporting local economies.
- Ensuring access for emergency services by providing reliable access to communities that may be cut off during severe weather events.

Eligibility criteria

Only eligible local governments can nominate projects for the CRC Program.

The 66 councils listed in **Appendix 1** are eligible to receive funding under the CRC Program. The CRC Program is primarily focused on those councils outside of South East Queensland to maximise investment of funds to rural and regional councils.

Who is not eligible for the CRC Program?

The councils in the South East Queensland region that are not eligible for CRC Program funding are Brisbane City, Gold Coast City, Ipswich City, Lockyer Valley Regional, Logan City, Moreton Bay Regional, Noosa Shire, Redland City, Scenic Rim Regional, Somerset Regional and Sunshine Coast Regional.

Eligible projects

Projects on both the state-controlled road and local government-controlled road (LCR) network are eligible. Project nominations for LCR will be limited to Local Roads of Regional Significance, or for Aboriginal Shire Councils, Significant Local Roads or Primary Access Routes, to ensure the Program focusses on higher order roads with greater regional benefits.

Project nominations must deliver on one or more of the CRC Program objectives:

- Road Safety
- Community resilience
- Economic productivity
- Emergency service access

Initiatives eligible for the CRC Program must focus primarily on road sealing projects rather than major structures or upgrade projects. Consideration will be given to minor culvert works and concrete crossings associated with road sealing projects. This may include:

- Road pavement and formation upgrade, including sealing and/or upgrading unsealed roads, pavement strengthening
- Minor drainage upgrades related to sealing works, including floodway's, formation related drainage

Works on lower order local government-controlled roads are not eligible.

Costs that can be included in the CRC Program nomination

All costs associated with pre-construction, construction and finalisation activities of delivering the project are eligible. These can include:

- Direct administration costs of the projects
- Detailed design
- Construction (including traffic management, contactors and materials)
- Post construction / finalisation costs.

Eligible and ineligible project costs

Program funding may only be used for 'eligible project costs,' which includes direct costs only.

The below table identifies common examples of eligible and ineligible costs and is not intended to be definitive. If there is any doubt about ineligible projects or costs, please contact TMR.

Eligible project costs	Ineligible project costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purchase of materials • labour hire • plant and equipment hire • construction activities • project management costs • labour costs for eligible work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routine maintenance • project costs incurred prior to the funding offer being signed • core business (business as usual costs) • any other costs as determined by the TMR to be ineligible • project cost overruns

Generally, provision of grant funding to local governments is not considered a taxable supply and so GST is not applicable.

Co-contributions

Co-contributions are not required under the CRC Program however projects with co-funding will be considered.

How to nominate

Funding is awarded through a competitive nomination-based assessment process.

To nominate a project, you must complete the nomination form, address eligibility and assessment criteria, and identify the year/s that the project could commence.





Nominations close 31 March 2025.

Assessment criteria

All project nominations will be assessed against the Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) below, which aligns with the CRC Program objectives.

Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA)

criteria, measures and weightings

			
Community connectivity and access	Productivity	Flood resilience	Regional importance
Importance of the route to the local community to access essential goods and services	Importance of the route to local and regional business to maintain operation	Project contributes to improving resilience of the road to weather events	Strategic value to region and/or communities
Accessibility for emergency services	Access to receive and dispatch goods and materials essential to maintaining regional business productivity	Vulnerability of the road segment to submersion	Strategic benefit beyond applicant local government area
Importance of the route to the local community to evacuate	Access for essential workers in or out of regional communities	Future weather event remediation works to be saved by improving flood resilience	Project completes a "missing link" of unsealed sections of road
Viability of alternative routes	Viability of alternative routes		Sealing or upgrade of unsealed road is identified in a regional plan, regional transport plan, investment strategy, or similar
30%	20%	30%	20%

CRC Program assessment process

Project nominations will initially be reviewed for eligibility based on the:

- project being on a LRRS or SCR, or Significant Local Road or Primary Access Route
- nomination being made by an eligible local government
- work type being within the eligible scope, and
- nomination including a response to the assessment criteria.

Councils are encouraged to consider regional priorities in accordance with Regional Roads and Transport Group regional investment strategies or other strategic planning documents. Nominations that achieve broad benefits to the region while enabling multiple projects to be delivered across the state will be prioritised.

Only those nominations that meet the threshold eligibility requirements will progress to the subsequent assessment phases.

Technical assessment

A technical assessment of relevant nomination materials will be conducted following confirmation of eligibility, with the results being used to inform the Assessment Panel's consideration of nominated projects. Technical assessors will provide advice to the Assessment Panel during moderation if required.

The technical assessment will provide information to the Assessment Panel on:

- whether the proposed treatment is fit for purpose,
- whether the cost and delivery time estimate is reasonable,
- whether the project is scalable and
- regional priority of the proposed project.

During this stage, additional information and/or clarification on nominations may be sought.

You may consider supporting your nomination with objective or authoritative anecdotal information about the problem and the project, such as frequency and duration of impact when the road segment is impassable (either submerged or unusable).

Panel assessment

Project nominations will be assessed against the MCA by a multi-disciplinary panel of senior officers with relevant interest and expertise from TMR and DNRMMRRD.

Should the project nominations received exceed the funding available, the Assessment Panel will use the project nomination information, the technical assessment, and as well as the outcomes of the MCA to prioritise projects and provide final recommendations for Ministerial approval.

Ministerial decision making

Upon completion of assessment, projects and years for delivery will be recommended to the Ministers, or their delegates, for approval.

The Ministers, or their delegates, will make the final decision on projects funded under the CRC Program.

Notification of outcomes

Following the Ministers' decision, councils will be advised of the outcome of their nominations in writing.

Successful projects

Funding agreement

Successful nominees are required to enter into a legally binding Agreement with TMR before commencing the project and making claims for payment. The Agreement must be signed by an authorised officer and returned to TMR for execution. Once executed by TMR, a copy will be returned to council.

Reporting and evaluation

All funded projects will be monitored by TMR to ensure that the Program is achieving the aim and objectives.

Quarterly progress reports are to be provided for funded projects. Progress reports are to be submitted via email to TMR and will include information on project progress, timelines (including if milestones are on track), risks and finances (including if it is anticipated the project will have cost overruns or savings).

Requests for information and/or updates on specific projects may be requested at any time. Funding recipients must work with TMR to provide the requested information in a timely manner.

Payment claim requirements

Payments will be made according to the following schedule:

Payment schedule	Milestone
First payment (50% of Project Funding)	TMR will make the first payment upon provision of the Agreement being executed by both parties.
Second payment (30% of Project Funding)	Commencement of construction.

Final payment (20% of Project Funding)	TMR will pay the Council upon receipt of a completed Post Completion Report, properly certified by the Chief Executive Officer or authorised delegate.
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The Post Completion Report is to be supported (where practical) by:

- project photographs showing the site before works commenced and after the project has been completed.
- any recognition signage, plaques or event documentation; and
- proof of expenditure (must include copies of general ledger extract for relevant job/project detail payments that indicate monies spent in the delivery of the project).

Projects over budget

Where a project goes over budget, there will be no additional funding from the State. As a result, any project cost overruns are to be managed within the approved project budget.

Projects under budget

In the event an approved project is completed under the original budget, the savings must be returned to the State for distribution to other projects. Council must notify TMR of any potential savings in the quarterly reporting and as early as the council become aware of the saving.

Project variations

The Agreement with TMR will provide that all project activities must always be carried out in accordance with terms and conditions of the Agreement. If circumstances occur that are likely to adversely affect a council's ability to deliver a project in compliance with the terms of the Agreement, then the council must submit a project variation request in writing to TMR.

Project variations must be sought as soon as practicable and within four weeks of the council becoming aware of any changes to the approved project, and prior to the completion of the construction of the project. Requests for variations with retrospective effect will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

The CRC Program has limited funding, and councils are expected to meet any cost overruns on a project.

Project variations must be approved prior to any change in work. Councils should not assume that a variation request will be successful. Regular reporting and engagement with TMR must be maintained through the project's life to be eligible for variations. The Minister or their delegate has complete discretion to approve or reject requests, noting the project must always represent good value for money.

Project withdrawal

If circumstances occur that a council determines an approved project can no longer proceed, councils must advise TMR in writing that the council is withdrawing the project from the CRC Program. Councils must provide reasons for the withdrawal, as well as any alternative or future plans relating to the project.

Council will be required to return any funds already paid to council unless otherwise agreed by TMR.

Acknowledgement of the funding

Funding recipients must acknowledge the contributions of the Queensland Government funding.

This may include signage requirements or acknowledgement in publicly made statements, on websites, or other appropriate documentation.

Communications

All media enquiries or public announcements relating to the CRC Program will be coordinated and handled by TMR in collaboration with DNRMMRRD. Nominees must seek and obtain TMR's approval before discussing any information regarding successful or unsuccessful nominations for funding support under or in connection with the Program.

For individual project media or communications, nominees must seek and obtain TMR's approval before contacting the media or sharing any communications about the project.

Enquiries and contact details

Nominees may contact TMR in relation to general questions, requests for clarification and requests for further information via RTA@tmr.qld.gov.au.

Privacy and confidentiality

The State will maintain controls in relation to the management of confidential information provided by nominees. Nominees should specifically mark any information the nominee considers to be confidential.

The use and disclosure of information provided by nominees for the Program is regulated by the relevant provisions and penalties of the *Right to Information Act 2009* and the *Information Privacy Act 2009* and the general laws of the State of Queensland.

The information contained in nominations will be regarded as private and confidential and will be treated as such by the department. This is subject to the operational need to provide nominations to assessors and any statutory or legal requirements to provide information to the Parliament and other organisations, for audit, law enforcement, investigative or other purpose.

As part of the assessment of a nomination, the department may need to consult with, and provide material from the nomination to, other government agencies or bodies, other organisations and/or relevant individuals, to substantiate any claims or statement made in the nomination form, or to otherwise assist in the assessment of the nomination. If this occurs, the department will endeavour to ensure that the parties who are consulted observe appropriate confidentiality provisions.

Following approval of a nomination, the broad details of a nomination may be placed online via the department website. In addition, regular updates will be provided on project implementation and progress.

Appendix 1 – Eligible (non-SEQ) councils

Aurukun Shire Council	Livingstone Shire Council
Balonne Shire Council	Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council
Banana Shire Council	Longreach Regional Council
Barcaldine Regional Council	Mackay Regional Council
Barcoo Shire Council	Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council	Maranoa Regional Council
Boulia Shire Council	Mareeba Shire Council
Bulloo Shire Council	McKinlay Shire Council
Bundaberg Regional Council	Mornington Shire Council
Burdekin Shire Council	Mount Isa City Council
Burke Shire Council	Murweh Shire Council
Cairns Regional Council	Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council
Carpentaria Shire Council	North Burnett Regional Council
Cassowary Coast Regional Council	Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council
Central Highlands Regional Council	Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council
Charters Towers Regional Council	Paroo Shire Council
Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council	Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council
Cloncurry Shire Council	Quilpie Shire Council
Cook Shire Council	Richmond Shire Council
Croydon Shire Council	Rockhampton Regional Council
Diamantina Shire Council	South Burnett Regional Council
Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council	Southern Downs Regional Council
Douglas Shire Council	Tablelands Regional Council
Etheridge Shire Council	Toowoomba Regional Council
Flinders Shire Council	Torres Shire Council
Fraser Coast Regional Council	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
Gladstone Regional Council	Townsville City Council
Goondiwindi Regional Council	Western Downs Regional Council
Gympie Regional Council	Whitsunday Regional Council
Hinchinbrook Shire Council	Winton Shire Council
Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council	Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council
Isaac Regional Council	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council