

Information sheet

Disaster recovery

Local government disaster recovery

This information sheet outlines the ways in which the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) can help local governments with recovery and reconstruction work following the flooding and damage caused by natural disasters, such as cyclones and floods. For more information about any of the matters listed below, or for assistance not specifically set out in this information sheet, call DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4). Information on applying for temporary emissions licence is in section 10 of this information sheet.

1. Quarries

The department can issue a temporary emissions licence to allow quarries to operate outside their permitted hours of operation to provide material for emergency recovery works. See section 10 for information on applying for a temporary emissions licence.

If you need to increase the maximum allowable amount of material that may be extracted from a quarry, contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4).

2. Waste transfer and disposal

If you are storing or sorting waste generated by or because of impacts caused by the severe weather event within a declared disaster area, these activities will not constitute the environmentally relevant activity of resource recovery and transfer facility operation and will not require an environmental authority. If you need to stockpile debris and waste from recovery or clean-up work on a site that is not a registered resource recovery facility, waste transfer station or landfill, the department will help you to choose an appropriate site and advise on how to manage it to minimise the chance of harm to the environment. Contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4) for more information.

If you need to extend the operating hours of an existing resource recovery facility, waste transfer station or landfill, the department can issue a temporary emissions licence. See section 10 for information on applying for a temporary emissions licence.

If you need to vary the type of waste that can be accepted at an existing facility, please contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4).

3. Waste disposal levy

The *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* provides that DESI may declare disaster management waste as a waste levy exempt waste. This declaration may be made when notified by a local government of a serious local event or if a disaster is declared under the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (DM Act). The declaration may apply limits to the status of the disaster management waste. Examples of declared limits may include the period of time for which waste will be considered disaster management waste or that waste is disaster management waste only if disposed of at a specific facility.

Information on the waste disposal levy is available at www.qld.gov.au using 'waste disposal levy' as the search term.

For more information about the waste disposal levy please email DESI at wastelevyapps@des.qld.gov.au.

4. Sewage treatment plants

The department can issue a temporary emissions licence to authorise bypass events that are not ordinarily permitted by your environmental authority or, if a release is urgently needed to avoid an emergency, the department can issue an emergency direction. See section 10 for information on applying for a temporary emissions licence.

Where sewage treatment plants have suffered damage that affects their treatment capacity, the department can approve a transitional environmental program to authorise non-compliance with environmental authority conditions while repair work is underway. For more information see the [Transitional environmental program guideline \(ESR/2016/2277\)](#).

Contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4) for more information.

5. Water treatment

If inflow of sediment or sludge is impacting a water treatment plant, the department can issue an emergency direction or temporary emissions licence to vary discharge limits to ensure ongoing water supply.

Contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4) for more information.

6. Ports

If build-up of sediment inhibits the operation of a port, the department can issue a temporary emissions licence to authorise an increase in dredging operations and the disposal of spoil, and assist with coordinating marine park permits for disposal if required.

Contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4) for more information.

7. Hazardous materials

The department can help with advice on managing and cleaning up hazardous materials.

Contact DESI 1300 130 372 (choose option 2) 24 hours a day or pollutionhotline@des.qld.gov.au for more information. Note the email is only monitored 8:30am to 5:00pm business days.

8. Coastal structures

If lawful structures such as public boat ramps, pontoons, jetties, beach access structures, boardwalks, viewing structures, netted swimming enclosures, pedestrian/bikeway bridges, stormwater infrastructure, roads, carparks, paths, seawalls or revetments have been damaged or destroyed, they can be repaired or rebuilt under the terms of the self-assessable code without local governments having to apply for an approval. Certain maintenance work on existing lawful work is considered to be excluded works and can be carried out without the need for a development application.

Works such as beach re-profiling or beach nourishment for the purposes of managing impacts from coastal erosion can also be carried out under the terms of the self-assessable code.

For more information see the [Code for accepted development - For tidal works, or work completely or partly in a coastal management district \(EPP/2017/3930\)](#) and the [Excluded work \(coastal\) guideline \(EPP/2016/2081\)](#).

Contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 4) for more information.

9. Wildlife

Where the disaster has caused problems with crocodiles, flying foxes, marine animal strike or strandings, contact DESI on 1300 130 372 (choose option 1).

For injured, sick or orphaned wildlife (other than crocodiles, cassowaries or marine mammals) contract RSPCA on 1300 264 625 (1300 animal).

- See link for further information on [caring for wildlife](#).
- See link for enquiries relating to [injured wildlife](#).

10. Temporary emissions licences

The department can issue a temporary emissions licence to change the conditions of an environmental authority or a transitional environmental program (TEP) to allow more contaminants to be released (such as sewage or sludge) or to extend hours of operation in response to an applicable event.

Information on applying for, deciding and dealings with a temporary emissions licence is in the guideline [Temporary emissions licence \(ESR/2015/1724\)](#). Applications are to be made using the form [Application for a temporary emissions licence \(ESR/2015/1727\)](#). The application fee for a temporary emissions licence is detailed in the information sheet [Fees for permits for environmentally relevant activities \(ESR/2015/1721\)](#).

You will need to provide the following information:

- The environmental authority number for the affected site.
- The condition number(s) that you want to change.
- What change you need. For example, 'Extend quarry hours of operation to 5am to 9pm'; or 'Release untreated sewage from release point A1'.
- If the information is easily available to you, please give a summary of sensitive environments that might be affected by the change (for example, nearby residents who might be kept awake by noise from a quarry, or nearby wetlands that might be affected by sewage releases).
- A brief summary of the reasons for the change (a dot point summary will be sufficient). Reasons could include, 'To allow more quarry material to be extracted for emergency road repairs'; or 'To avoid an uncontrolled release of untreated sewage from the sewage treatment plant'.
- A brief summary of the potential impacts on nearby residents or businesses (a dot point summary will be sufficient). Impacts could include, 'Disturbance to nearby residents from the noise of quarry operations'; or 'Small increase in public health risk from faecal coliforms'.

If possible, contact your local DESI office to discuss the proposed change before you lodge the application form. Otherwise contact the department on 1300 130 372 (option 4) during business hours.

You should email the application form to DESI on email: palm@des.qld.gov.au. If you need to lodge the form outside business hours, please call 1300 130 372 (option 2). The after hours operator will have an on-call officer contact you to arrange lodgement.

11. Temporary authority

An application can be made for a temporary authority to conduct an ERA under certain emergency situations. These situations include a disaster situation declared under the DM Act and several other events as prescribed in s316GA of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. A temporary authority can be granted for a maximum period of 4 months.

It is recommended that, in instances where time permits and prior to making an application, you have a pre-lodgement meeting with DESI to understand what information you need to provide with your application.

For more information on the range of emergency situations where a temporary authority would be appropriate, refer to the [temporary authority information sheet \(ESR/2023/6544\)](#). To apply for a temporary authority and for more information on the application requirements, refer to the [temporary authority application form \(ESR/2023/6428\)](#) or contact DESI by phoning 1300 130 372 (select option 4) or emailing palm@des.qld.gov.au.

12. Further information

The latest version of this publication can be found at www.qld.gov.au using the publication number ESR/2015/1814 as a search term.

Version history

Version	Date	Description of changes
1.00	29 January 2013	Document first published
2.00	14 April 2014	Amended to apply to natural disasters generally rather than specifically to Cyclone Oswald, updated coastal structures information for the self-assessable code and updated template and formatting.
3.00	15 April 2014	Amended to include reference to fee for temporary emissions licence.
4.00	20 February 2015	Amended to include updated coastal self-assessable code information.
4.01	15 August 2016	Added publication number ESR/2015/1814 and updated to current corporate style. Added publication number for referenced documents.
5.00	29 March 2017	Updated for Cyclone Debbie. Updated contact details for PaLM and replace reference to development approval with environmental authority.
6.00	25 September 2017	Document publication numbers updated in Coastal Structures section. Website links updated.
6.01	15 June 2018	Document rebranded to align with machinery of government changes
7.00	01 November 2019	Document updated to include details about waste disposal levy exempt waste.
7.01	18 November 2020	Comma added after 'jetties' in first sentence of section 8.
7.02	09 March 2022	Contact details updated for TELs.
8.00	06 May 2022	Document updated following the 2022 South East Queensland flood event.
9.00	28 June 2023	Section 11 (Temporary authority) added, plus other minor changes.
9.01	24 August 2023	Added reference to the temporary authority information sheet (ESR/2023/6544).
9.02	05 February 2024	Document rebranded to align with machinery of government changes.