

# Building Resilience



PRINT & DESIGN STUDIO

**Preparation is the key to minimise the damage to your business from a natural disaster.**

**This fact sheet is designed to provide advice on the longer-term ‘background’ considerations to assist in building the businesses’ overall resilience. Implementing policies and ensuring the items listed below have been addressed well before any event (such as during the months building up to cyclone season) will assist you when an event has been predicted and your attention turns to more immediate needs.**

In thinking about long term preparations, ask yourself questions about your business. What could the business look like after a cyclone? Will you be cut off? How will you irrigate after a cyclone if power is not restored quickly? Do you have a generator? Where do you store fuel and how much? Do your plants need shade?

The answers to each of these questions will change for each business and the most meaningful questions about your business will come from the person who knows it best – you.

## Planning

It is critical that a disaster preparation and recovery plan is drafted and that all employees are aware of, and understands it. Ideally you should develop plans (including contingencies) to cover the three phases of preparation, namely:

- 1. Overall planning, well prior to the cyclone season;**
- 2. Plans to be implemented when a Cyclone Watch is issued;**
- 3. Established contingency or business continuity plans to respond to possible damage scenarios to improve recovery after a cyclone has passed.**

Include information that doesn't tend to change, such as shelter areas, preparedness checklists and emergency contacts as well as information that does change, such as contact information for suppliers, customers and insurers. This should include preparations for the management of plant stock as well as clean up and recovery procedures to minimise damage to plants after the event.

Review your businesses structures and lay out. Are they appropriate? Could they be improved? Build new structures according to the best available industry knowledge, local council requirements and the specifications from NGIQ and James Cook University's building recommendations for nursery structures in cyclone prone areas.

Consider planting a tree windbreak around key areas of the property. Many growers believe that mature trees assist in buffering structures against wind by acting as a windbreak and dispersing strong winds before they hit the nursery and also serve as a barrier to catch flying debris. Any plantings should be planned carefully and weighed against the potential for fallen trees and debris (e.g. branches) to cause damage. Be particularly aware of the positioning of vegetation around nursery structures, buildings or access routes.

Safe zones – consider building an area (or designating existing areas) that are structurally more secure that may offer more protection for the storage of critical machinery or vehicles that will aid your recovery.

Review insurance policies. Insuring the nursery to be fully covered from cyclone damage is not an easy task. Insurance options vary markedly for similar businesses within the same region and many insurers simply will not cover nursery businesses for cyclone damage. Those that will often do not understand the nature of the business and have struggled in the past to adequately assess damage and costs in a timely manner. Talk to your insurer now and be clear about what their policy will and will not cover in the event of a claim.

Develop a list of suppliers of fertilisers, containers, chemicals, growing media and other components so that you are sure of access to all the production requirements of surviving plants. Remember that some of these suppliers might also be affected in the event of a disaster, so demand for replacement components might be high. In your inventory of suppliers include multiple options for sourcing these components to improve your chances of rapid return to operation.

Ensure that there is an up-to-date inventory of all the plant stock on the property at all times. After a disaster, you will need to assess your losses and determine what needs replacement.

It is important to keep all critical documentation in a safe place and to be ready to pack it in safe, waterproof containers in the event of a disaster. This might include insurance, financial, legal and identification documents. Ensure that critical data is backed up in a portable storage device and stored in a secure location. If possible, keep another copy of critical data at a completely separate location.

Talk to your neighbours and make sure you are aware of each others plans and potential needs during an event. Think about coordinating with neighbours regarding a plan for mutual help in cleaning up and preparation for future cyclones. Staff access and labour after a cyclone is one of the main limitations to getting up and running again, so pooling resources might be advantageous.

Review all information at least once a year.

## Maintenance

Ensure that all of the fixtures and fittings throughout all of the nursery's structures are checked leading up to the cyclone season. Loose, worn, damaged or old fittings should be tightened, repaired or replaced according to the manufacturer's specifications well before they might be needed.

Replace protected cropping structure skins and shade cloth in a timely manner as needed or recommended by the manufacturer. Keep the nursery area generally clean and clear of rubbish and potential flying debris. Conduct an annual 'Spring Clean' to dispose of old pots, pallets, drums and containers before the storm season.

Ensure back-up power such as generators are serviced and working prior to the storm season and that adequate fuel is kept on hand. Make sure cleanup equipment such as chainsaws are also well maintained and ready for use if required.

Maintain trees and vegetation on the property. Dead-wood larger trees and prune trees close to buildings and structures.

Maintain an off-site backup of computer records, business contacts and banking/account details to make business recovery faster and easier.

## Admission

Sometimes the admission and acceptance that there are some things cannot be protected is a critical step to inform your planning. A direct impact from a cyclone is devastating and no amount of planning or structural preparations will protect everything under those circumstances.

As difficult as that can be to accept, it can be useful when planning and can help prioritise actions and investment focus in nurseries within cyclone-prone regions. It can also assist in managing the long-term business planning for the nursery. Factoring in a regular event (e.g. one-in-ten or one-in-five year cyclone) that will result in a significant cost or overall loss to the business for that year could influence your financial planning or budgeting.