

**IN THE MATTER OF  
THE QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY 2011**

**STATEMENT OF GREGORY RUSSELL GOEBEL**

On this 18<sup>th</sup> day of April 2011, I, Gregory Russell Goebel of Australian Red Cross, Humanity Place, 49 Park Road Milton, Qld, 4064 say as follows:

1. I am the Executive Director of Australian Red Cross Queensland and was appointed on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2000. The Executive Director is the most senior management position within a State / Territory and is a member of the National Management Team which advises the National CEO on strategic and management issues. In addition the Executive Director is responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services and programs in Queensland consistent with the strategic direction of Red Cross.
2. In the area of disasters the Executive Director has a key responsibility to lead and coordinate all disaster service operations in a State in collaboration with the National Emergency Team, and supported by a State Emergency Services Team.

**Qualifications and Professional Experience**

3. I hold a Bachelor of Arts (University of Queensland) and am also a Justice of the Peace.
4. In my eleven years with Red Cross in Queensland I have been involved in many disaster operations including:
  - Childers backpackers fire June 2000
  - Cyclone Larry March 2006
  - Equine Influenza disaster October 2007
  - Brisbane Storms November 2008
  - Ingham floods February 2009
  - South East Queensland floods May 2009
  - Western Queensland floods March 2010
  - Cyclone Ului March 2010
  - Cyclone Tasha and flooding December 2010-2011
  - Cyclone Yasi 2011
5. During Cyclone Larry I led the Red Cross operations in North Queensland. These operations involved establishing evacuation centres, overseeing the deployment of staff, liaising with key government agencies and also initiating door to door household checks and long term recovery.
6. During the recent flooding and cyclone event I was invited to sit on the State Disaster Management Group which met twice daily during the flood and cyclone activation. I attended meetings between 28<sup>th</sup> December 2010 until 8<sup>th</sup> February 2011. During the floods and cyclone events I visited a number of communities directly affected, inspecting evacuation and recovery centre operations, speaking with individuals affected, meeting with other emergency services personnel and partner agencies, and meeting local Mayors and elected officials. On two occasions I accompanied the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health, along with the Director General Communities and other senior emergency personnel including the State Disaster Coordinator on

Signed



Witnessed by



inspections of flood affected areas including St George, Dirranbandi, Esk, Fernvale, Lowood, Karalee and Ipswich.

### Role of Red Cross in disasters

7. The establishment of Red Cross under Royal Charter confirms our distinctive status as an auxiliary to the human services of the public authorities, including during times of natural disasters. This sees Red Cross recognised by government as a unique organisation and as a predictable and reliable partner outside the NGO sector.
8. Prior to, and particularly since Cyclone Larry, Red Cross nationally has enhanced its capability to contribute to disaster preparedness, response and recovery. This has included:
  - The development and distribution of a range of resource materials relating to disaster preparedness for individuals, seniors, children and those with a disability. This program is called Emergency Rediplan.
  - The development and distribution of post disaster booklets including "Coping with a major personal crisis" and "Cleaning up after an emergency – Dealing with wind and water damage". These publications are widely distributed to people in evacuation centres and those attending recovery centres as well as residents visited as part of disaster outreach visits.
  - The establishment of an Emergency Services national structure including appointment of Emergency Services Coordinators in key regional centres in Queensland, who generally serve on Local Disaster Management Groups. Further information on the National Structure, role and responsibilities of key personnel are provided below as **Appendix 1** under the heading of **National Structure, Roles and Responsibilities**.
  - The recruitment and training of emergency service volunteers (over 1400 in QLD and approximately 10,000 in Australia) to undertake a range of roles based on State/Territory emergency management arrangements, including:
    - management of evacuation centres
    - assisting with personal support and meet and greet functions in government-established Recovery Centres
    - undertaking door to door welfare checks on people immediately affected by disasters
    - undertaking outreach visits in affected communities, in partnership with other agencies, such as Department of Communities and Lifeline in Queensland
    - registration of evacuees on the National Registration and Inquiry System, and matching enquirers with evacuees

Further details of training are provided below, including specific training prior to the flooding event under the heading of **Training and Preparation**.

- The adoption of AIMS (Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System) for all disaster operations, aligning Red Cross operations' command and control with other emergency service agencies.

Signed



Witnessed by



- Active contribution to emergency management planning and policy, through representation of senior staff on State Government and Local Government committees (eg in Queensland the State Disaster Management Group, State Disaster Coordination Group, State Community Recovery Committee, District Disaster Management Group and Recovery Committees, Local Disaster Management Groups and Local Government Welfare Sub Committees. Further details of involvement in these committees is provided below under the heading of **Management Planning and Policy**.
9. Through this broad commitment Red Cross has become an integral part of disaster management and response in Queensland with its role accepted by government departments and a number of Local Regional Councils.
  10. In Queensland Red Cross has established MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) with a number of local Government Authorities as well as the Department of Communities, and Queensland Police Service. These MOUs detail the responsibilities and commitments of Red Cross with organisations in times of disaster and generally reflect the roles detailed above. Further details are provided below under the heading of **Memorandum of Understandings and Partnership Agreements**.
  11. In response to the recent floods in Queensland, Red Cross:
    - deployed over 1400 volunteers and staff to assist in the disaster including a number emergency service personnel from interstate and New Zealand
    - managed 33 evacuation centres throughout Queensland accommodating over 12,000 people
    - managed 11 emergency shelters/evacuation centres (related specifically to Cyclone Yasi) accommodating 6500 people
    - assisted in 30 Recovery centres providing personal support and meet and greet, and recovery triage services
    - deployed outreach teams to 31 different locations in affected areas, in partnership with Department of Communities staff and Lifeline counsellors
  12. In addition to this early involvement, Red Cross has also embedded teams with a number of the worst affected communities to work with them in longer term community recovery. This has occurred in Brisbane, Ipswich, Somerset, Lockyer Valley, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and South West, Far North Queensland including Cardwell, Mission Beach, Tully, Tablelands, Tully Heads and Hull Head.
  13. As a result of our direct and ongoing involvement we believe we are well placed to make a number of observations which may assist with disaster preparedness and response in the future.
  14. In addition, Red Cross can draw upon its international experience in emergency management including the internationally recognised SPHERE standards for disaster response developed by humanitarian NGOs and Red Cross Red Crescent movement in 2004.

#### **Training and Preparation of Volunteers and specific training in the lead up to the flooding event**

15. All Red Cross staff and emergency services volunteers undertake a range of training programs prior to being activated in disaster events. The aim of this training is to

Signed



Witnessed by



properly prepare staff and volunteers for their role in disaster activations, familiarise them in the types of situations they will encounter and their work with other agencies. This training includes:

### **Personal Support Training**

16. Personal Support training is the nationally consistent one-day course for all Red Cross Emergency Services personnel. The mandatory course provides information on the emergency management arrangements in Queensland and the functions and responsibilities of Red Cross during emergencies, the impacts of emergencies on affected people, and teaches communication skills required to assist emergency affected communities and individuals, as well personal self care during emergencies.

### **Team Leaders**

17. Team Leader training provides Red Cross Emergency Services personnel with information on the procedures and processes required to lead a team during emergency response and recovery operations. The Leader training applies to teams in Evacuation and Recovery Centres, as well as Personal Support Teams and Outreach Teams.

### **Evacuation Centre Management**

18. Evacuation Centre Management training is an intensive one day course that focuses on managing an evacuation centre to provide the basic needs for evacuated persons. The course provides the knowledge to prepare evacuation centre management teams in areas including:
  - How to set up and manage an evacuation centre
  - The responsibilities of Red Cross and all partner agencies including Local Government, The Salvation Army, Lifeline, St Johns Ambulance, and animal welfare agencies
  - Dealing with distressed evacuees, resourcing challenges, and staffing requirements
  - Communication and reporting to internal and external partners
  - Demobilising an evacuation centre.

### **REDiSupport**

19. REDiSupport training is a two day advanced training course to prepare the first response teams for emergency activations outside their local area (with a maximum of 24 hours notice) to support the capacity of other Personal Support Teams. The training covers roles and procedures in different emergency response and recovery contexts and develops useful skills such as map reading and radio communications.

### **Australian Inter-Services Incident Management System (AIIMS)**

20. AIIMS training is a one and two day training course for key staff and volunteers and provides an understanding of the Red Cross incident management system used during emergencies. AIIMS is a nationwide emergency management system used by the majority of response agencies ( Fire and Rescue Services, Local Councils, Airport Corporations etc) to determine the command and control structure of emergency

Signed 

Witnessed by 

operations. Red Cross uses AIIMS to determine the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved in an emergency operation.

### **Training in the lead up to the flooding event**

21. On 13 October 2010 Red Cross Emergency Services staff attended a "season preparedness day" for emergency services personnel hosted by the Department of Community Safety in which the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) foreshadowed a high likelihood of above average seasonal rainfall and a higher than average number of tropical cyclones due to the La Nina affect.
22. In response Red Cross focussed on the up-skilling of key Emergency Services incident management personnel and held a two day state operations exercise (Exercise Jigsaw) on 18-19 November to practice the management of a large scale (AIIMS Level 3) disaster event in Queensland.
23. In addition Red Cross alerted all Emergency Service volunteers and staff in Season Preparedness Document sent out in December 2010 informing them of the operational updates and likely seasonal events.

### **Management Planning and Policy**

24. Red Cross is represented on, or is a member of a number of State, District and Local Government disaster related committees. This representation has enabled Red Cross to input into emergency management planning and preparation to varying degrees. The following committees have Red Cross representatives in attendance:
  - State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) – by invitation only but not a permanent member – represented by Executive Director
  - State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) – represented by State Emergency Services Manager
  - State Community Recovery Committee (SDRC) – represented by State Emergency Services Manager
  - District Disaster Management Groups (LDMG) - (Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Cairns, Mareeba, Townsville, Cassowary Coast, Roma, Charleville) – represented by Emergency Services Regional Coordinators or Red Cross Regional Managers
  - Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG) - Redlands, Murweh, Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Tablelands, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook, Burdekin, Mackay) – represented by Emergency Services Regional Coordinators or Regional Managers, or key Emergency Services Volunteers
  - Community Recovery Committees (Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Redcliffe, Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Tablelands, Gold Coast, Logan, Ipswich, Redlands, Toowoomba, Warwick, Dalby, Roma, Charleville)- represented by Emergency Services Regional Coordinators or Regional Managers or key Emergency Services volunteers.

### **Memorandum of Understandings and Partnership Agreements.**

Signed



Witnessed by



## MOU's with Local Governments for managing Evacuation Centres

25. Red Cross has entered into Memorandums of Understanding with the following Local Government Regional Councils:

- Brisbane City Council
- Rockhampton Regional Council
- Moreton Bay Regional Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Murweh Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Central Highlands Regional Council
- Burdekin Shire Council
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- Hinchinbrook Shire Council

26. These MOUs detail the role of the Regional Councils and Red Cross during an emergency. Whilst there is some variation in the MOUs the roles are generally as follows:

The obligations of Regional Councils are to:

- Ensure that Red Cross is activated during an emergency
- Advise Red Cross of the date, time and location where the Evacuation Centres will be activated
- Provide Red Cross with regular updates on the operation of Evacuation Centres detailing the duration that the facility will be activated
- Manage the facility housing the Evacuation Centres including cleaning, communications, power, health and safety standards, access, security (through a third party contractor if necessary) and other functional arrangements
- Activating all other agencies that provide services to Evacuation Centres (generally these could include Salvation Army, Lifeline, RSPCA, St Johns Ambulance etc); and
- Provide Red Cross with a list of potential evacuation sites every twelve months

The obligations of Red Cross are to:

- to provide sufficient Emergency Service Teams (staff and volunteers) to undertake the following roles at activated evacuation centre(s) throughout the region dependant on access;
  - a. Evacuation Centre management teams capable of coordinating the welfare activities at activated evacuation centre / s
  - b. Registration of evacuees under the national Registration and Inquiry Systems
  - c. Providing personal support to evacuees at activated evacuation centre(s)

Signed



Witnessed by



## MOU with QLD Department of Communities to support Recovery Operations

27. In addition Red Cross, along with other Government Departments and NGO's has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Communities ( copy attached)
28. The MOU details the role of Red Cross in a number of areas including
- **Preparedness** - planning, training and exercise, and provision of general information on community recovery services,
  - **Alert/Standby** - communicating with agencies and staff and placing disaster community recovery staff on standby
  - **Activation** - convening community recovery committees, establishing actual resource commitments from partners to meet needs of an event and operational plans, briefings and deployment of staff
  - **Immediate Response** - formal activation and restoring services to the level where Local Government and agencies can manage the continuing recovery process,
  - **Medium to Long Term Recovery** - ongoing case management, community development and rehabilitation measures and re-establishment of social and cultural activities and support networks, and
  - **Stand-down** - operational briefings with community recovery committees.
29. In Preparedness phase our role is to
- Serve on the State Community Recovery Committee
  - Ensure that staff involved in the delivery of disaster community recovery service delivery are appropriately trained
  - Participate in information sharing and financial management protocols
  - Develop, maintain and share key disaster community recovery information materials
  - Provide a resource for young people in dealing with a disaster 'before, during and after' the event
30. In Alert/Standby phase of a disaster our role is to
- Ensure any staff who are placed on standby are briefed on their roles and responsibilities as well as those of partner organisations
31. In Activation phase of a disaster our role is to
- Advise regional counterparts of 'activation' status
32. In the Immediate Response phase of a disaster our role is to
- Activate plans according to the scale, impact and location of the specific disaster event
  - Take responsibility for registration at the disaster site eg Evacuation Centre and support police at the State Inquiry Centre
  - Provide information to the public on what assistance is available from Red Cross
  - Provide Outreach services – checking on wellbeing of affected community members
  - Disseminate recovery information
  - Manage Evacuation Centres

Signed



Witnessed by



33. In the Medium to Long Term Recovery phase of a disaster our role is to
  - Partner the Department of Communities in providing community development programs
34. In the Stand-down phase of a disaster activation our role is to
  - Participate in operational debriefs to identify elements of community recovery operations that worked effectively as well as those that did not, and utilise this information in reviews of policies and procedures to inform future disaster community recovery operations.

#### **Partnership Agreement with Queensland Police Service to support the National Registration Inquiry System (NRIS)**

35. Australian Red Cross also has a partnering agreement with the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service to agree on responsibilities for the management of personal information from or about disaster / incident affected persons who are located within Queensland or evacuated to Queensland from overseas and interstate where the National Registration and Inquiry system has been activated.
36. The role of Red Cross is to support QPS in the registration of peoples affected by an emergency specifically those people who have been evacuated to evacuation centres. Red Cross trained volunteers register all evacuees on an NRIS Registration Form which is inputted into the NRIS computer database either by Red Cross or QPS personnel. Similarly enquiries taken from the community to check the whereabouts and safety of family and friends are captured on the NRIS Enquiry Form by Red Cross volunteers.
37. In addition Red Cross activated the NRIS website "Safe and Well" to enable individuals to self register their whereabouts or enquire about loved ones.
38. During the flooding event 12,546 people were registered as evacuees on NRIS generating 12,824 enquiries. For Cyclone YASI 12,447 registrations were recorded generating 1,942 enquiries. More details of NRIS are provided later in this statement.

#### **New Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements**

39. It is the view of Red Cross that the new disaster management arrangements implemented as a result of changes to the Disaster Management Act 2003 have been an outstanding success and have facilitated more effective response operations.
40. In particular the appointment of a State Disaster Coordinator from within the Police Service has enabled a level of coordination and reach not before experienced in the response phase of disasters in Queensland. Significantly it has enabled the input of vital information from the field directly into the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG).
41. Similarly the appointment of a State Recovery Coordinator to focus on recovery operations will prove beneficial in the long term.
42. The Act sets out the membership and functions of the SDMG. Its formal membership is restricted to Directors General of State Government Departments as well as a representative from the Local Government Association of Queensland. It is noted however that the meetings convened during the floods and cyclones also included the Premier and Ministers, representation from outside agencies including Red Cross,

Signed, 

Witnessed by 



Australian Defence Forces, and key utility services including Energex, Optus, Telstra, and Bureau of Metrology. This broader involvement of non Government organisations was at the invitation of the Chair of the SDMG. This collaborative approach proved to be an important contribution to more effective information exchange and coordination of activity in the response phase of the disaster.

43. It is the opinion of Red Cross that, given our recognised Royal Status as an auxiliary to Government in humanitarian services, and our critical role in disaster response and recovery, a permanent role on the SDMG would contribute to long term planning and policy in disaster preparedness.
44. ***Consideration should be given to amending the Disaster Management Act 2003 in the future to recognise the role of non-government organisations in contributing their expertise and experiences in the development of emergency management policy and practice.***

#### **LDMG disaster preparedness and early warning**

45. The Disaster Management Act 2003 establishes Local Government Disaster Management Groups (LDMG) with specific functions including:
- developing effective disaster management and regularly reviewing and assessing disaster management (Clause 30b)
  - helping local government prepare disaster management plans (Clause 30c)
  - identifying and providing advice to relevant district groups about support services required by the group to facilitate disaster management operations (Clause 30d)
  - identifying and coordinating the use of resources (Clause 30h)
46. The effectiveness of the committees is critical to the local operations of disaster management, including both response and recovery. However the membership, level of preparedness and decision making abilities of these committees vary considerably. It is critical that local governments be strongly encouraged to fulfil these requirements, including the development of comprehensive disaster response plans, ensuring effective relationships between agencies, and the regular review of plans and arrangements in light of changing circumstances and events. This can be a challenge in areas where major emergencies or disasters have not occurred in recent memory and where there have been significant staff changes with little corporate memory of disaster preparedness.
47. While some LDMGs undertake regular disaster management exercises not all of these exercises involve agencies outside the Government sector. The disadvantage of this is that in real life disaster operations the linkages and respective roles undertaken by these agencies are not understood, or misunderstood or not well coordinated. Red Cross has experienced confusion about its role in disasters despite clear and agreed responsibilities set out in MOUs.
48. In disasters it is the marginalised, disadvantaged and socially isolated who are most at risk. The homeless, those with disabilities, those in aged care facilities and those elderly with English not as their first language need special consideration which need to be taken into account in local disaster plans. Other groups include, but are not be limited to:

Signed



Witnessed by



- those with mobility difficulties (eg restricted to wheelchairs)
- those with oxygen dependent equipment
- socially isolated elderly dependent on meals on wheels or other homes based services
- residents off retirement villages or aged care facilities

49. In many cases these clients are managed by non government agencies. But it is the linkages and incorporation into disaster plans that will ensure they are accounted for in disasters. There have been examples in the past of residents trapped in houses who have been unable because of their medical and mobility conditions to notify authorities of their immediate evacuation needs or post disaster assistance. Whilst door to door welfare visits sometimes identify these clients, better preparation in the form of social mapping by local governments would help identify those who are at most risk during times of disaster.
50. ***The preparation of local government disaster plans needs to include consultation with organisations working with these client groups and incorporate information sets, and organisational linkages into plans, that clearly identify those groups or citizens most at risk.***
51. One way to achieve this would be to develop a statewide spacial mapping platform ( Google earth type technology) that enables "special vulnerable individuals" to be identified by street location for the purpose of disaster response or evacuation. Whilst there will be privacy issues to be considered, a protocol that enables access to the information in times of disaster would ensure that those requiring special consideration could be easily located and assisted. As our population continues to age with more elderly choosing to live at home being able to indentify then in disaster situation is a growing priority.
52. Early preparation is essential in managing disasters especially when the deployment of volunteers and emergency services personnel are involved. Early warnings of impending disasters must be matched by early plans to evacuate or relocate residents.
53. For support agencies such as Red Cross the need to pre-position emergency service volunteer teams into locations before access and transport is closed is essential to being able to support and manage evacuation centres.
54. In the recent floods there were a number of occasions when, because inadequate timely notification of evacuation centre activations, Red Cross was unable to organise and deploy Emergency Service Teams. On a number of occasions the only way into flooded towns was by charter plans and helicopter. These delays cause angst to some Local Authorities who were expecting Red Cross to be able to manage evacuation centres.
55. In part the reluctance to act early may reflect uncertainty regarding the eligibility of reimbursement of expenditure under the NDRRA (National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements). These arrangements set out the conditions under which cost sharing will be undertaken between the State Government and the Federal Government, which subsequently support the operations by local governments and emergency service support agencies.

Signed

[Redacted Signature]

Witnessed by

[Redacted Signature]

56. ***Greater certainty for reimbursement of expenses incurred by local authorities in a disaster may encourage them to act more quickly in establishing evacuation centres and shelters, thus enabling them to give the public earlier information of the location and capacity of these centres.***
57. Membership of LDMGs varies across local government regions. In some cases Red Cross and other not for profit agencies are included in the membership and not in others. In some cases Local Councils establish Welfare Sub Committees of the LDMG to oversee the establishment of evacuation centres and recovery arrangements.
58. *It is suggested that the membership of LDMGs be reviewed to ensure greater Statewide consistency and the inclusion of key disaster service NGOs as standing members of the committees.*
59. An important aspect of the recent flood and cyclone response was the mass evacuation of residents from a number of towns, hospitals, nursing homes and aged care facilities. In most cases, these evacuations were undertaken by the defence force using military aircraft and helicopters. Red Cross volunteers assisted in the mass evacuation of residents and some pets from Theodore. Whilst these operations were effectively and efficiently undertaken, it has been suggested that early involvement of the defence forces in the planning process would have enabled a more coordinated and timely response for those being evacuated.
60. ***It is suggested that Commonwealth and State arrangements be examined to enable the defence forces to be engaged early in the planning phase of disaster response to enable a more speedy propositioning and deployment of resources in critical situations..***

#### **Evacuation centres and emergency shelters**

61. Evacuation centres are a critically important aspect of the response to disasters in Queensland. They are established in facilities and locations determined by Local Councils as part of their local disaster plans. They are places capable of providing safe shelter for people from rising waters, flooding and storm surges and enable people to be accommodated and fed for periods of one day to many weeks.
62. Local Governments have the responsibility to not only identify safe and appropriate venues to accommodate expected number of evacuees, but also to gain access and open up the facility, organise the provision of bedding and linen, arrange food preparation and distribution, security and other operational requirements
63. Evacuation centres can be required to accommodate a range of people from local residents with children, elderly citizens and carers, in some cases nursing home residents, the homeless, back packers, holiday makers, and people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds including Aboriginal and Torres Strait citizens.
64. Red Cross is of the view that many people impacted by disasters requiring shelter in evacuation centres are particularly vulnerable, and the delivery of services in these centres requires a level of care, compassion and understanding of the impact that traumatic events can have on behaviours and needs of people. For that reason Red Cross ensures that all staff and volunteers delivering services in evacuation centres have undertaken appropriate training courses and have criminal history checks.

Signed

[Redacted Signature]

Witnessed by

[Redacted Signature]

65. It is estimated that over 75 evacuation centres were established during the 2010/11 floods and a further 15 emergency shelters established to accommodate people during Cyclone Yasi.
66. 33 evacuation centres were managed by Red Cross whose role was to:
- coordinate the activities in the centres and the agencies involved (eg Salvation Army, Lifeline, Save the Children etc)
  - establish and put into effect ground rules for the operation of the centres (including meal times, lights out, daily briefings and activities etc)
  - register evacuees on NRIS
  - meet and greet evacuees and provide personal support
  - assign accommodation
  - manage incidents
  - liaise with Police, Health and other key operatives
  - provide regular statistics and data for input into SDMG reports.

Evacuation centres, depending on their capacity, are generally supported by:

- Salvation Army who provide food and catering
- Lifeline who provide counselling
- Save the Children who provide activities for children
- First Aiders – sometimes provided by St John's Ambulance

Details of Evacuation Centres and Shelters managed or staffed by Red Cross are attached as an Appendix 2.

67. Emergency shelters are different from evacuation centres in that they provide safe haven from immediate and imminent danger for a limited period of time until the danger passes. Emergency shelters would most commonly be established to provide safe haven during cyclones or bushfires. As such they do not generally provide bedding or long term food preparation and require residents to bring their own immediate needs - blankets, pillows, some food and water for the period of the danger. Unlike evacuation centres they are generally not comfortable venues but serve a specific purpose for a limited amount of time.
68. Emergency shelters were established in Cairns, Tully, Townsville, Ingham, Innisfail, Palm Island and other locations during the immediate phase of Cyclone Yasi and accommodated over 6500 residents. A number of these shelters were in shopping centres and some in education facilities. In some cases the shelters identified were well below standard and reflected poor planning and consideration of the possible impact of the forces involved in the event.
69. Based on the recent flood and cyclone experience the emergency shelter concept and function requires further consideration and development in Queensland to address a range of concerns, including:
- the adequacy of information to citizens about the location of centres and safe routes to centres
  - speed of establishment of centres to ensure that adequate resources are deployed well in advance of their occupancy (eg toilets and water)
  - safety and accessibility of location of shelters, particularly in relation to the type and scale of imminent hazard

Signed

Witnessed by

70. A number of evacuation centres and shelters were spontaneously established by well meaning community organisations and churches. While many of these served an immediate purpose, some became unmanageable as the number of occupants and their duration overwhelmed local resources. In one case this resulted in Red Cross resources from other LDMG designated centre being deployed to register evacuees and oversee these new facilities.
71. In the case of two shelters designated for use during the Cyclone Yasi one shelter was assessed as unsafe by Red Cross volunteers (it was subsequently totally destroyed by the cyclone) and the evacuees moved to a safer Red Cross shelter. In another location the shelter was assessed as unsafe being enclosed by glass windows and louvers and the evacuees moved to a safer building. Both instances highlight the need for greater attention to be paid to the designation of safe shelters in the context of the disaster event.
72. These cases are not the first time that Red Cross has had concerns about the suitability of venues for evacuation centres. In previous disasters some evacuation centres have been designated in grain storage warehouses with health and hygiene issues, or facilities for which bedding has not been supplied for days requiring people to sleep on concrete floors.
73. During the Brisbane floods two evacuation centres were designated by the Brisbane City Council. These were the Brisbane RNA showgrounds and the QE2 Sports facility at MacGregor. Both venues had adequate facilities and accommodated over 2400 evacuees with Red Cross managing the centres with support from a number of partner agencies including Lifeline, Salvation Army, MICA, St John's Ambulance and Save the Children. Support was also provided by the Brisbane City Council health officers and the Queensland Police Service.
74. Whilst the facilities operated with a high level of efficiency and coordination, the demographic and vulnerable nature of evacuees highlighted the level of complexity in managing evacuation centres. QE2 evacuation centre hosted residents from a ethnic Aged Care facility, individuals with high level of disability requiring carer and medical support, as well as families from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The Brisbane RNA centre accommodated large numbers of Brisbane's regular homeless community, those with drug dependencies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as well as aged seniors and people from other cultural backgrounds. Better planning would have enabled some of these evacuees, namely those from the Aged Care facility and those with high medical needs to be accommodated in more appropriate facilities. However the point to be made is that evacuation centre management requires specialist skills because people are at their most vulnerable and in that regard "unofficial" evacuation centres run a high risk of not being managed by appropriately qualified or trained personnel.
75. The following suggestions are therefore presented for consideration:
- a) *Evacuation centres need to be clearly identified in Local Government Disaster Plans and regularly audited by both councils and service providers to ensure their safety, appropriateness and capacity.*
  - b) *Standards need to be established for emergency shelters that enable them to be adequately located and able to withstand the significant forces and danger that accompany disasters.*

Signed



Witnessed by



- c) *Communication systems need to be put in place at a local level to advise residents, travellers and others of the designated evacuation centres and emergency shelter, and safe routes to centres.*
- d) *MOUs need to be developed between local councils and emergency service providers to clearly identify the roles of each party in establishing and managing evacuation centres and emergency shelters.*
- e) *Regular exercises should be undertaken (not just desk based exercises) which enable all agencies to practice the establishment and management of evacuation centres and emergency shelters and have a better understanding of the difference between the two.*
- f) *Disaster plans at all levels should be reviewed regularly, including audits of facilities and disaster preparations including those of supporting agencies and organisations.*

76. It should be noted that Guidelines have been produced to assist Local Governments in evacuation planning and shelter design These include:

- QLD Government Department of Works: Design Guidelines for Australian Public Cyclone Shelters , prepared by Mullins Consulting Pty Ltd, August 2002.
- Guideline ( Disaster Management Act 2003) Mitigating the adverse impact of Cyclones – Evacuation and Shelter ( April 2008) by QLD Government Department of Emergency Services and Department of Public Works
- Queensland Evacuation Guidelines – Department of Community Safety ( draft October 2010)

#### Information

77. Timely and appropriate information is critical in disasters to inform and update the public of impending danger, to enable them to make appropriate preparations, and also to provide advice on services and facilities to assist them during and after the crisis.
78. The use of social media has become a powerful and growing influence in communicating information, although it can also bring with it some inherent challenges and the potential for misinformation. The use of Twitter by the Queensland Police Service during the floods and cyclones was ground breaking in terms of providing up to the minute accurate critical information and also correcting misinformation. Unlike other media forms which rely on electricity supply (TV and Radio) it enables personal communication devices (modern mobile phones) to access the information. Acknowledging that it is still limited in its usage, nevertheless it has a great capacity to impart instant information, complementing more traditional sources of communication.
79. Similarly some local councils established special Facebook pages to impart information. These communication methods have high usage not only with the younger generations but also travellers and have the advantage of on-forwarding information to broader audiences. This highlights the flexible approach needed to effectively impart information.

Signed



Witnessed by



80. Social media is also becoming an important emergency network for those affected by disasters. An American Red Cross White Paper: *The Case for Integrating Crisis Response With Social Media, August 2010*, assessment of the role of social media in disasters gave examples of social media playing out in the real world of disaster response:
- 2009 UK newspaper recounts the story of two Australian girls aged 10 and 12 who updated their Facebook status as a cry for help when they found themselves in a precarious situation. Their school mates saw the status update and summoned help
  - A Canadian woman trapped in rubble in the Haiti earthquake sent a text message to Canadian Foreign Affairs for help and was rescued
  - An Atlanta city councillor encountered a woman in trouble and because his mobile phone was low on battery was able to Twitter a message for help.
81. ***It is recommended that greater use of social networking media in disasters should be encouraged and explored by all agencies involved in emergencies.***

#### **National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS)**

82. NRIS is a voluntary registration system for displaced people during disasters. It is a computer based filing and retrieval system, designed to provide information and basic details on the whereabouts of persons affected by disasters to authorities and the inquiring public. NRIS aims to reduce distress in communities and families separated by disaster. It also provides information to authorities to assist with response and recovery activities. An example is in assisting police with the identification of people who may be missing as a result of a given emergency.
83. NRIS was developed as an outcome of lessons learnt from the mass evacuation of Darwin after Cyclone Tracey in 1974. Launched by its then custodian (Department of Defence's National Disasters Organisation) in 1976, NRIS is presently managed, maintained and operated by Red Cross on behalf of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.
84. In the 2010-2011 Queensland and Victorian floods and Cyclone Yasi, NRIS handled more than 34,000 registrations and 15,000 inquiries (In the 2009 Victorian bushfires NRIS took over 22,000 registrations and 21,000 inquiries).
85. During recent disaster events in Queensland, the majority of people were registered in person by Red Cross volunteers at evacuation centres and other locations. This information was then input into NRIS remotely, utilising both Queensland Police and Red Cross resources. NRIS was also available on the Red Cross website enabling people to register their whereabouts or inquire after missing loved ones on the internet.
86. In Queensland, responsibility for set up and operation of the State Inquiry Centre (SIC) lies with Queensland Police. Red Cross provides resources in the field to collect registrations and inquiries, and also surge capacity to the SIC should police request assistance. While the service was delivered adequately, the scale of the events was challenging and necessitated a good deal of flexibility.

Signed

Witnessed by

87. As part of an ongoing revitalisation of NRIS since the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, Red Cross has submitted a funding bid to develop and implement a new version of NRIS to the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. If funding is successfully obtained, this updated version of NRIS will enable:
- Provision of data on persons for whom concern is expressed to Police;
  - Near real time information to authorised agencies to improve targeted services and assistance; and,
  - Provision of early impact data (including mapping capabilities within agencies systems) to a range of agencies to inform planning and scaling of response and recovery activities.
88. ***Greater awareness and acceptance of NRIS and its capabilities by state and local governments and their agencies would further enhance support for affected communities.***

#### **Early recovery and recovery centres**

89. Recovery centres provide a focal community point for the distribution of information, emergency financial payments and other forms of support from a range of government and non-government agencies.
90. While the Department of Communities has tried to implement a new model for recovery centres unfortunately, they were generally still seen as a place to receive financial assistance, rather than a hub of recovery support from a variety of agencies. Much of this can be put down to the size of the recovery venues established and available at the time. The smaller the centre, the less space for agencies. It was noted that agencies and staff operating in recovery centres did a good job under difficult circumstances. However, there is room for improvement to ensure greater efficiency of operations, especially in the area of payments and people management.
91. ***It is suggested that consideration be given to the development of guidelines and procedures to further enhance operations, including:***
- ***Combining emergency payments by both State and Federal Government agencies to a single point of transaction could be considered to eradicate the need for people to queue twice for different forms of emergency payments.***
  - ***Establishing triage procedures for assistance would enable those people with special needs to be fast tracked into the system (eg the elderly, those medical conditions, or families with young babies).***
  - ***The provision of food and water and medical teams should be considered standard operating practice, with flexible opening hours to take into account the distances travelled by residents, or the business operations of farming communities.***



## Donations of Goods

92. The donation of goods is becoming an increasingly significant issue in disaster recovery operations. The public urge to help those in need triggers the collection and transport of clothing, food stuffs, electrical good and furniture in large quantities into towns and communities affected by disasters. Despite public pleas to the contrary, goods continue to arrive in some cases in shipping container load or semitrailer convoys, arriving unannounced and uninvited at evacuation centres and recovery centres. In some cases the media have encouraged and supported such operations.
93. Following the Victorian Bushfire an excess of 40,000 pallets of goods from across Australia took up more than 50,000sq meters of storage space requiring approx 35 staff to manage handling, transport, distribution and disposal.
94. As a result of this growing problem, the Emergency Management Capability Branch of the Federal Attorney Generals Department funded a project by the State Recovery Office of the South Australian Department of Communities that explored:
- Issues related to unsolicited goods
  - Issues relating to management of these goods if they are donated
  - Issues related to education of the public and the media
  - Issues in relation to corporate donations
  - Understanding the views and attitudes of recipients of donated good,
95. The report noted:
- "Experience from this and other disasters indicated that a large proportion of what was donated may be either unwanted or unusable causing further expenditure and possible outrage from the public."*
- "Donation of unsolicited goods takes on a life of its own and public figures such as politicians and community leaders, disaster spokespersons, recovery staff and volunteers find it very difficult to say 'no'. Some of the effort expended is about finding ways to keep the donors happy and has very little to do with the needs of he recipients. Recipients expresses strong concerns and commented that they felt the pressure to be grateful for even very substandard goods. Second hand clothing is very rarely seen as a useful donation but these items are usually the bulk of what is donated".*
96. Those observations could also apply to a number of the donations received by communities resulting from the 2010/11 floods and cyclone events. Warehouses of donated goods were set up in areas such Theodore show grounds, Fernvale School, Ipswich show grounds, Chinchilla. In some cases semi trailer loads of second hand goods were arriving daily unannounced at venues distracting emergency service workers from their real priorities. Some of these donation convoys were supported by media stories of generosity. Whilst some goods are usable and needed, in many respects about 70% are unusable and cause a high level of angst amongst those who are meant to be grateful for the donations. Whilst this is a sensitive area nevertheless it is one that needs to be managed for future disasters.

Signed



Witnessed by



97. The Report entitled "Management of Donated Goods Following a Disaster" published in February 2010 made a number of recommendations, including:
- That proposed (National) guidelines become part of state, territory and regional emergency plans
  - That a communication strategy be developed that informs politicians, community leaders, media and emergency management networks and the general public about donated goods. This communication strategy should be incorporated into state and territory emergency management plans
  - That recovery managers should regularly and formally access feedback from recipients of donated goods so that their opinions, needs and wishes are considered in any future planning
  - That a strategy be developed to encourage corporate donors to work in partnership with government and NGOs and to incorporate disaster needs in their Corporate Social Responsibilities policies.
98. ***Consideration should be given to the adoption of these recommendations to overcome an increasingly prevalent problem of unsolicited and unwanted donations.***

## Conclusion

99. The disaster events of December 2010 – February 2011 were extraordinary and overwhelming in many respects and tested all involved in emergency service response and recovery, including Red Cross. There is no doubt that given the scale and ongoing complexity of the disaster, Governments at all levels, including Local Governments and their agencies such as the Defence Services, Queensland Police Service, Department of Communities, Emergency Management Queensland and Fire and Rescue Services worked extremely effectively along side Red Cross and other agencies such as Salvation Army, Lifeline, Save the Children and other not for profit organisations, to assist and look after those most severely effected. But there is no doubt that we can learn lessons and continuously improve our preparedness and response as we have done since Cyclone Larry.
100. Whilst those involved in previous disasters had memory and experience to rely on, some communities, especially those in Brisbane and south east Queensland who had not experienced a severe flooding for over 36 years, relied heavily on timely and credible information given by knowledgeable sources. Even then the level of expectation from some was unable to be satisfied as the speed of events developed and the unexpected occurred.
101. Whilst disasters always have the potential to result in tragic loss of life and injury, much can be done to better prepare communities and develop greater resilience. Red Cross believes that greater emphasis on disaster preparedness at both a community, individual and infrastructure is required.

Signed



Witnessed by



I swear that the facts and circumstance stated in this statement are from my knowledge except those which are from information only.

Sworn by GREGORY RUSSELL GOEBEL on 21 April 2011 at 49 Park Road, Milton, QLD in the presence of:

Signed:



Witness



Solicitor

Signed .....

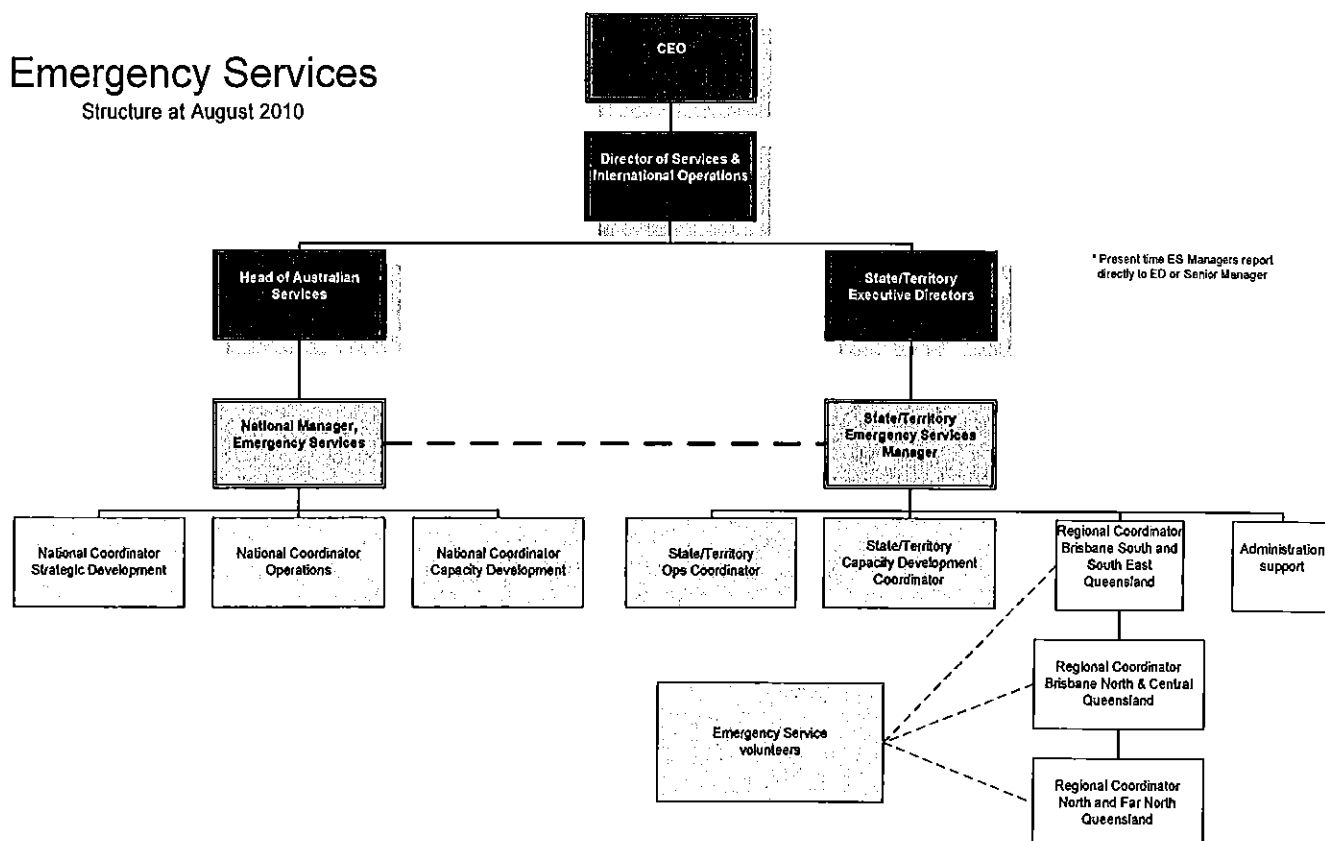
Witnessed by .....

## Appendix 1

### Red Cross Emergency Services Structure at August 2010

#### Emergency Services

Structure at August 2010



#### National Emergency Services Team

The national emergency services team is overseen by a National Manager, a senior officer within the Red Cross organisational structure, and has a National Coordinator, Strategic Development, National Coordinator-Operations, and a National Coordinator-Capacity Development

##### **National Manager**

The National Manager, Emergency Services, is responsible for coordinating and supporting current emergencies and disasters roles and functions of Australian Red Cross and strategic provides direction for the service. He also plays a pivotal role in building and maintaining relationships with key agencies and organisations to position Red Cross as a leader in emergency management, in particular national organisations and agencies.

This leadership role provides supports to State and Territory Emergency Services managers.

##### **National Coordinator-Strategic Development**

This role contributes to the strategic direction and priorities of Emergency Services. It has a strong emphasis on engaging and managing stakeholders at a senior level and representing emergency services at high level consultations, particularly with government agencies and departments. The National Coordinator also supports the National Manager, Emergency

Signed

Witnessed by

Services in high level project work, including analysis and implementation of strategies for best practice in emergency management.

### ***National Coordinator-Operations***

The National Manager Operations coordinates and develops the National Emergency Services program with a strong focus on developing and improving the operational tools and resources to ensure a high quality service. The National Coordinator also works in close partnership with the National emergency Services team in the development of new initiatives and provides leadership, advice and support to states/territories during times of emergencies.

### ***National Coordinator-Capacity Development***

This role is responsible for building Emergency Service capacity on a National basis, ensuring that staff and volunteer base are adequately skilled for deployment in response to disasters and emergencies. The Capacity Development Coordinator provides advice and support to State/territory Coordinators to ensure compliance with national training and retention programs. The National Coordinator also works in close partnership with the National Emergency Services team in the development of new initiatives

## **Queensland Emergency Services team**

The Queensland team is overseen by a State Manager, with a State Coordinator-Operations, and a State Coordinator-Capacity Development, and Regional Emergency Services Coordinators in South East Queensland, Central Queensland, North and Far North Queensland, and trained Emergency Services volunteers.

### ***State Manager***

The role is responsible for the management of Emergency Services in the state and reports to the state Executive Director and the National Manager, Emergency Services. The Manager ensures state capacity to maintain appropriate preparedness levels and meet Red Cross obligations under State emergency management arrangements. In the event of an emergency the Manager coordinates response, ensuring adequate resourcing is provided, and all actions fulfil Red Cross responsibilities. In addition, the Manager develops and maintains relationships with key government and community organisations and represents Red Cross on disaster management committees.

### ***State Coordinator-Operations***

The Coordinator Operations reports to the State Emergency Services Manager and is responsible for determining & monitoring state capability. The Coordinator also:

- Maintains Cross operational arrangements and requirements including the state specific standard operating guidelines and plans
- Contributes to the program development, enhancement and maintenance of the NRIS system
- Contributes to the development and implementation of key resources, including emergency services operational management systems and processes, AIMS and the use of technology
- Represents Red Cross at relevant emergency management meetings
- In the event of an emergency, undertake a key role in a coordination, command, planning or logistics role, to ensure operational requirements are met

Signed, 

Witnessed by 

### ***State Coordinator-Capacity Development***

The Coordinator Capacity Development reports to the State Emergency Services Manager and is responsible for operational capability. The Coordinator also:

- Ensures all emergency service personnel trained and developed to respond to emergencies
- Develops and monitors state capability to ensure operational requirements are met
- Trains and monitors Regional Coordinators in the delivery of nationally agreed emergency services training packages
- Assists in the monitoring, evaluating and revising of national training courses and materials on an ongoing basis and contributes to the development of new materials
- Negotiates opportunities for state based advanced training with other external agencies
- Designs, develops and conducts emergency services exercises and workshops, to maintain skills and aid retention
- In the event of an emergency, undertake a key role in a coordination, command, planning or logistics role, to ensure operational requirements are met

### ***Regional Emergency Services Coordinator***

Regional Coordinators report to a Regional Manager and are responsible for the development and maintenance of emergency services capacity and capability in regional locations. Key responsibilities include:

- Recruitment and development of volunteers
- Delivery of training within the region
- Maintenance of Red Cross operational arrangements in the region
- Representation of Red Cross at relevant emergency management and key stakeholder meetings in the region
- In the event of an emergency, undertake a key operational role

Signed



Witnessed by



## Appendix 2

### Evacuation Centres managed by Red Cross

Evacuation Centres	Address	Registered Evacuees	Date Opened	Date Closed
Brisbane-QEII	CNR Mains & Kessels Rd, Macgregor, Brisbane	803	11/01/11	20/01/11
Brisbane-RNA Showgrounds	600 Gregory Tce, Bowen Hills, Brisbane	1641	11/01/11	21/01/11
Bundaberg Civic Centre	190 Bourbong Street, Bundaberg	146	28/12/10	3/01/11
Bundaberg North High School	Marks Street, Bundaberg	27	29/12/10	30/12/10
Chinchilla Cultural Centre	80-86 Heeney St, Chinchilla	69	28/12/10 12/01/11	29/12/10 13/01/11
Condamine "Tent City"	Unknown		20/01/11	22/01/11
Dakabin (Moreton Bay)	Adventist Christian College	48	11/01/2011	12/01/2011
Dalby Agricultural College	Bunya Highway	74	1/01/11	17/01/11
Dalby State Primary School	26 Nicholson St, Dalby	241	27/12/10 10/01/11	30/12/10 13/01/11
Dalby Showgrounds	Nicholson St, Dalby	88	28/12/10	31/12/10
Emerald Agricultural College	Capricorn Hwy, Emerald	437	28/12/10	8/01/11
Emerald Town Hall	Egerton St, Emerald	1867	29/12/10	16/01/11
Emerald St Patrick's	41 Yamala St, Emerald	148	30/12/10	6/01/11
Emerald Harvest Life Christian Church	9-11 Gladstone St, Emerald	208	31/12/10	6/01/11
Gatton Shire Hall	North St, Gatton	60	11/01/11	24/01/11
Helidon Community Centre	Arthur St, Helidon	326	14/01/11	23/01/11
Ipswich Showgrounds	81 Warwick Rd, Ipswich	2367	11/01/11	28/01/11
Karalee State School	Arthur Summerville Rd,	No NRIS data	15/01/11	17/01/11

Signed

Witnessed by

Evacuation Centres	Address	Registered Evacuees	Date Opened	Date Closed
	Karalee, Ipswich			
Ipswich Ripley Community Church	72 Redbank Plains Rd, Shilo, Ipswich	22	13/01/11	15/01/11
Lowood State High School	Prospect St, Lowood	No NRIS data	18/01/11	19/01/11
Moura	Anglo Minesites	373	28/12/10	15/01/11
Rockhampton CQ University	Yeppoon Rd, Norman Gardens	426	31/12/10	20/01/11
St George High School	112 Victoria St, St George	15	4/01/11	9/01/11
Theodore RSL	1 Dawson Avenue, Theodore	260	28/12/10 10/01/11	29/12/10 17/01/11
Toowoomba Grammar School	24 Margaret St, Toowoomba	66	12/01/11	16/01/11
Warwick Indoor Recreational And Aquatic Centre	Palmerin St, Warwick	101	27/12/10 11/01/11	28/12/10 12/01/11
Warwick Slade Campus	70 Horsman Rd, Warwick	185	27/12/10 12/01/11	29/12/10 15/01/11

Signed,



Witnessed by :





# Evacuation Centres Yasi

Evacuation Centres	Address	Registered Evacuees	Opening Date	Closing Date
Cardwell Community Hall	Brasenose St, Cardwell	294	6/02/2011	19/02/2011
Ingham Showgrounds	Cooper St, Ingham	107	4/02/2011	7/02/2011
Innisfail Shire Hall	CNR Grace & Rankin St, Innisfail	4	4/02/2011	6/02/2011
Tully Mill Recreational Hall	Writ Lane, Tully	98	2/02/2011	15/02/2011
Tully Red Cross Centre	14 Bryant St, Tully	39	2/02/2011	11/02/2011
Tully Baptist Church	6 Plumb St, Tully	17	4/02/2011	6/02/2011

## Shelters

Name Of Shelter	Address Of Shelter	Highest Number of Evacuees	Open	Close
Bentley Park College	McLaughlin Road, Cairns	223	2/02/2011	3/02/2011
Calgary Assembly of God (Townsville)	569 Bayswater Rd, Townsville	102	3/02/2011	5/02/2011
James Cook University	McGregor Rd, Smithfield	851	2/02/2011	3/02/2011
Palm Island PCYC	Mango Ave, Palm Island	77	2/02/2011	3/02/2011
Redlynch State College	Jungara Rd, Redlynch, Cairns	1100	2/02/2011	3/02/2011
Stockland Earville Shopping Centre	537 Mulgrave Rd, Earville, Cairns	2350	2/02/2011	3/02/2011
Trinity Beach State High School	Madang St, Trinity Beach, Cairns	350	2/02/2011	3/02/2011
Woree State High School	Riggs St, Woree, Cairns	435	2/02/2011	3/02/2011

Signed

Witnessed by