

Reconstruction of Major Infrastructure affected by floods

Introduction:

While it is essential that temporary repairs be made, to allow the major highways and railways to be utilised once again, **it appears that none of the government agencies are learning from history, or past mistakes.**

This submission is made to the enquiry, to try to address this issue.

I have been an international consultant for 16 overseas governments during the last 30 years, on major infrastructure projects, some of which have been up to \$1620 million in size.

In the Sultanate of Oman in 1981, they experienced a similar flood to what has just occurred in Queensland, with catastrophic damage and loss of life.

Unlike Queensland, they learnt from their previous planning and design mistakes, and made it mandatory that all reconstruction works was to be reconstructed, above the latest record floods levels.

1. This meant that all major roads, railway lines, and infrastructure were reconstructed above the latest flood levels of 2010, or 2011.
2. Wherever the previous infrastructure was washed away by floodwaters, improved water flows were designed into the reconstruction project, by the additions of many extra culverts, thus allowing any future floodwaters to be allowed to flow, without further damage to the infrastructure.
3. **I note that present railway repair gangs are not doing this on any of the places where floodwaters washed away the railway line foundations. This means that future floods will again wash these services away, unnecessarily wasting large amounts of government money.**
4. It is easier to correct the mistake once, and hence allow the continuous use of reconstructed infrastructure, in times of emergencies, thus not stopping the export of products to overseas markets, or the slowdown of essential services to flood affected towns, or the swift transfer of whole groups of people in evacuation situations.
5. On the repairs to the Toowoomba range crossing, there have not been any attempts to design flood mitigation trenches into the flood repair works. This means that future floods will just wash it all away once again. As a professional engineer, who takes pride in his work, I look upon these

Reconstruction of Major Infrastructure affected by floods

efforts as professional negligence, by the organizations undertaking and supervising this work, and a complete waste of taxpayer's money.

6. I have already offered my services to the Qld. Government "free of charge" to assist in this reconstruction process, but alas this has been rejected. Maybe they do not want somebody looking over their shoulder, who knows how it should be done, to international standards.
7. There will be people who say I have a diploma in Electronics & Communications, therefore I am not qualified to make these comments. My answer to them is as follows:
 - a. I have designed, and supervised the construction of a bombproof building, which is 2 stories below ground, and 327 metres above ground, and is on an Omani Stamp.
 - b. I have designed a 61-storey high-rise building, the first fully computerised building in Asia.
 - c. I have designed the longest 4-lane pre-stressed concrete bridge over the river Indus in Pakistan, which withstood the enormous floods they experienced in that country last year.
 - d. As a result, of my expertise I was awarded membership of the International Executive and Professional Registry, which is reserved for the top 500 professionals in their fields.
 - e. Only Australian engineers, who are also members, are qualified to make comments on my submissions.
8. I note that in previous Qld government projects, there have been massive cost over-runs and project blowouts, with no accountability for the waste of taxpayer's funds.
 - a. It is essential that proper project management procedures be put in place for the management of these projects.
 - i. All contracts let to undertake repairs, be fixed priced contracts.
 - ii. No contract variations can be approved, unless they have been carefully vetted and costed, by competent project engineers and they sign off on the variations.
 - iii. Project managers to be legally held accountable for the projects they supervise.
 - iv. Approval agencies to be legally held accountable for the monies they are entrusted to use, for these reconstruction projects.
 - v. This includes all government ministers, including the Premier and/or the Prime Minister, as they are using money donated by

Reconstruction of Major Infrastructure affected by floods

the people in these flood relief programmes and hence are custodians of grant monies to the government.

- vi. The Federal and the State auditors need to be empowered to examine these project accounts, on a regular basis, and call in the Australian Federal Police, if they believe that the reconstruction processes and procedures are not being followed.
 - b. This is the only way that the public at large will feel confident with the government's handling of this process.
9. It has been stated by several government agencies that this reconstruction process is said to take over 2 years to complete. This is assuming that the reconstruction process uses "traditional work hours", over a 5-day working week. This can be reduced by 208 days, if the reconstruction program is allowed to work 7-days per week. **It has been done in emergency situations overseas, why not here?**
10. In the area around Esk, there are roads, which have been completely washed away. The army has the capability to construct "Bailey Bridges" crossing these creeks, to allow immediate use of these roads, on a single lane basis, until permanent bridges are reconstructed. **Why has this not been done already?**
11. Finally, the Qld and the Federal Governments need to publish regular progress reports of the reconstruction processes.
- a. It must be transparent and clearly non-political. Every area that has been affected by the floods must be seen to be receiving equal attention, irrespective of whether the present sitting member for that area is Labour, Liberal, National Party, Green or independent.
 - b. This disaster is of a catastrophic nature, and in the interest of the whole nation, party politics must be put aside, in the interest of the common good, the nation as a whole.
12. It is further hoped that as a result of this enquiry, a more efficient, and effective process will be developed, so that future incidents can be managed more effectively, with safeguards in place to have adequate funds available for these events.
13. The fact that 12,000 applications have been received as of 10th February 2011 and only 800 have been processed, clearly indicates that public servants are sitting on their hands and not working in "military mode" like other organizations helping this process.
14. Our volunteer organization in Toowoomba, received 1040 emergency food packages from Sydney by semi-trailer on the 1st February. In just 4 days, we were able to distribute these food parcels to organizations in:

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- a. Grantham,
 - b. Withcott
 - c. Gatton
 - d. Toowoomba Crisis Accommodation
 - e. Oakey
 - f. Dalby
 - g. Chinchilla
 - h. Miles
 - i. Condamine
 - j. Roma
15. Tomorrow another semi-trailer arrives and we will do it all over again. There are skilled people who really know how to work in emergencies, but alas, the government does not want to use them, because they will embarrass the existing employees, by getting up off their backsides and doing the work, for the good of the nation.