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REPORT ON FLOODS

Executive Summary

The January 2011 Brisbane River flood impacted the suburbs of the Moggill Electorate with houses in many of the suburbs including Kenmore, Brookfield, Anstead, Bellbowrie, Moggill, Mt Crosby and Karana Downs suffering inundation. However the impact on the community also included the cutting by floodwaters of the electorate into three areas, two of which were "islands" separated from other districts.

All areas suffered severe loss of power.

So it raised the issue of supporting and in particular **INFORMING LARGE CUT-OFF COMMUNITIES WHILST THEY REMAINED IN SITU AND NOT SUBJECT TO EVACUATION.**

The key issues raised within this report revolve around the fact that there appeared to be little or no disaster planning, an area that is strongly recommended for improvement.

There is one overriding principle apparent from my experience of the Brisbane floods and that is that local communities, cut-off and working under the severe disadvantage of largely being without power, organised themselves remarkably well and kept the individual members of their community safe and in organising themselves gave a great deal of comfort and reassurance to sections of the community that were frightened by the events occurring around them and particularly in the absence of reasonable information (compounded by the fact that they did not have power and therefore did not generally have television or internet information).

It is my strongest recommendation that we learn from the fact that the best work in supporting and protecting these communities was done by the communities organising themselves despite the very difficult circumstances. Any move as a result of the inquiry into the Brisbane River flood of 2011 that results in a shift away from local communities organising and caring for their own members to concentrate decision making and action in a central bureaucracy or in bureaucratic processes would be a backward step and would clearly show that the lessons of this natural disaster have not been learnt,

In general the three communities coped extremely well whilst receiving limited support only, from a confused array of centralised bureaucracies.

It was at no point clear to anyone on the ground what the responsible entities for decisions was or how that decision making person or entities could be contacted to achieve satisfactory results.

What happened on the ground

On January 11th following a period of heavy rain which saw some flooding of local creeks in the Moggill area, warnings were received in relation to an impending flood of the Brisbane River with an expected peak the following Thursday the 13th. Local residents particularly in the Bellbowrie, Moggill, Mt Crosby, Karana Downs areas who are well aware that the only access road, Moggill Road, cuts during any flood event attempted to stock up and prepare to be cut-off (warnings pertained to the city reach and were note 'local' warnings).

This resulted in quite a number of local residents being in the Kenmore area and as evening approached on the 11th Moggill Road was cut at the first of several locations.

I went down to the area near the Moggill Road/Rafting Ground Road intersection where dozens of vehicles had gathered unable to return to homes in suburbs such as those mentioned and Pullenvale, Pinjarra Hills and Anstead.

About this time I had a call from the manager of the Kenmore Village Shopping Centre saying that they were being approached by people who were unable to get home and needed a dry, safe place to spend the night.

I agreed with the manager of the shopping centre that we needed a location that stranded people could be advised to go to so that we would be able to assist them.

I went up to the area near Rafting Ground Road and advised stranded motorists that should they need assistance that Kenmore Village would be kept open.

Local Councillor Margaret de Wit, who was absent on holidays at the time, and I communicated and it became apparent that the preferable location for anyone who needed to spend the night would be the Kenmore Library which is also in Kenmore Village shopping centre.

With the assistance of Councillor Julian Simmonds, the Councillor for Walter-Taylor a nearby council ward we were able to access the manager of the Kenmore Library who I think deserves the highest praise having returned under these circumstances to open the library and to supervise its use. I stress that it was never necessary to house significant numbers of displaced people in this community as most were able to make their own arrangements with friends and neighbours and many local people willingly opened and offered their homes.

This did of course raise the issue that whilst we did not need substantial numbers of people in the evacuation centre, we did not have the ability to track the whereabouts of many of the people whose homes were either inundated or who were cut-off from returning to their homes in the six suburbs that spent the next few days in isolation.

For communication we were largely dependent on word of mouth. It was a very impressive sight to see the communities care for their own members.

I do note that as far as I am aware no places of refuge, in the event of any form of natural disaster whether it be flood, fire, earthquake or other, appear to have been arranged.

It is my understanding that Moggill State School and Mt Crosby State School both of which are large schools in high, safe locations were unable to be used. Keys were not initially available to access them.
Similarly there were no formal arrangements for a rallying point or evacuation centre in Kenmore.

Given the communities are so readily cut-off from one another each needs a designated information centre in the event of disasters.

So at the end of the first day I was pleased that we had successfully made available a safe place in Kenmore. We were completely cut-off from the other two communities and there was little or no information as to who to contact to assist people in those communities.

The next morning January 12th saw one of the more disappointing aspects of the natural disaster when the Coles Supermarket at Kenmore Village which was forced to call Police and close their doors as disturbances and I understand "punch ups" broke out in the checkout queues.
This was the combination of the fact that the majority of the supermarket staff were unable to go to work on the 12th because they lived on the Bellbowrie side of the flooded Moggill Road.

The performance of the store management as a subsequent event shows I think was outstanding.

They did all that they humanly could to open as many checkouts as possible including conscripting shoppers from their supermarket who were off-duty Coles staff doing their own shopping and getting them to open checkouts but of course the panic buying meant that the checkout queues could not cope.

In the event of panic supermarket buying particularly after the onset of a natural disaster as occurred on January 12th it is my recommendation that consideration be given to limiting purchases in order to stop panic buying and enable supermarkets which may again may be operating under very difficult circumstances to process as many of the community as possible. A $50 limit would appear appropriate and allow people to stock up on basic essentials without going "stupid".

However every cloud has a silver lining they say and later on the 12th I received a phone call from the Kenmore Rotary Club on behalf of the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army had recently opened a new facility on Moggill Road at Chapel Hill which had not yet developed fully into use and was able to accept two groups of nursing home patients from the Riverview suburb of Ipswich which was severely inundated.

Around 150 Riverview nursing home patients were brought to safety at Chapel Hill but resources were not in place to provide for the unexpected influx. This meant that the Salvation Army and the local Rotary club were not able to source even the basics of bread, milk, tea bags, toilet paper, personal hygiene products, cereal, basic food items.

At no point was anybody involved in the care of these patients able to make contact with an authority that was able to provide provisions for such a large group of elderly and disabled (many of them high care) evacuees.

Once again the performance of the caring members of the local community, with little outside support, proved to be highly effective.

Because of the earlier "food riot" at Coles Kenmore the management of the Coles store and the management of the Kenmore Village Shopping Centre allowed me and members of the Salvation Army and the Kenmore Rotary to purchase supplies through a backdoor entrance to provide for the Riverview evacuees.

I could not write this report without saying how greatly impressed I was with the volunteers of Kenmore Rotary and the members of the Salvation Army who had nothing else on their mind except caring for these evacuees whom they had never even previously met at a time when many of their own members were suffering severe impacts from the Brisbane flood.

But again I stress it was action of caring community volunteers at the local level that provided safety and support and in this case food for the evacuees.

At a local level my own office was inoperative due to loss of power which meant we had no computers or phone. Nor did we have any of the electorate office staff who both live in the suburb of Mt Crosby and were therefore completely isolated and much of the time out of contact.

I was able to assist numerous local residents with the aid of two volunteers and the assistance of Telstra in diverting our disabled office phones to a mobile which one of our volunteers manned 24 hours a day for the next few days.

Councillor Margaret de Wit was away and also cut-off from her own home when she did return on the evening of the 12th. Federal Member Jane Prentice's office building at Chapel Hill was inundated and non-functional.

Being able to man my phone and also with assistance from 612 ABC, who allowed some media attention to be focussed on the communities that were isolated and without power and without information and not just the central Brisbane communities that were suffering from inundation. The phone line we were able to provide "ran hot" giving me a clear picture of what was happening in, by now, three separated communities.

In the Mt Crosby community the only suitable building that could be accessed was the after school care building at the Mt Crosby State School for which fortunately a P & C official had a key. During this phase, the Reverend Dave Baker of the Uniting Church in Karana Downs with some magnificent support from the tiny Karana Downs Rotary Club and Lions Club set up an informal evacuation centre in the after school care building.

I note that there were only two members of the SES in this area and it does not appear that a generator was available. Fortunately for the community of Karana Downs a kind community member donated a generator so that the informal evacuation centre could function. The centre gave assistance to the relatively small number of people who had to be evacuated from houses in that community but also to many families without power who required assistance with things such as meals etc.

Again I could not write this report without expressing my praise in the highest terms for Reverend Baker, the Kearneys, Mary and John of Karana Downs Rotary and a number of volunteer supporters including a former retired Wing Commander from the
Airforce.

Unlike the suburb of Moggill the local Police officers who were essentially those stranded in the area when the road was closed worked from the Karana Downs Police Station not from the evacuation centre.

I also note a comment from the retired Wing Commander that he had offered his services to the local SES group but was told they would not accept his assistance because of insurance and litigation concerns.

Like elsewhere he continued his volunteer efforts in the evacuation centre and made a big difference to the lives of many of the people needing help and support.

The Mt Crosby/Karana Downs community was cut in an area known locally as Ugly Gully by the Kholo Creek which flooded. Until stopped by the Police one resourceful local provided a boat service ferrying people backwards and forwards across the flooded creek as people who had not made it home before the road was cut desperately tried to rejoin their families. This scenario was repeated at a number of points where the roads were flooded and people left their cars and improvised ways of crossing flooded roadways. Unfortunately in quite a number of cases they did not leave their car on high ground and quite a few cars ended up completely immersed in the muddy waters of the Brisbane River.

After a time Police officers stopped the canoe taking people across Kholo Creek.

I had the greatest difficulty in making contact with the Mt Crosby/Karana Downs community as for quite some time I was uncertain what was happening on the ground and which volunteers had assumed responsibility for caring for the community. Once I was able to establish that Reverend Baker had put together an evacuation centre for that community for anyone needing assistance I was able to speak to him on a regular basis and attempt to obtain assistance where it was necessary.

Like in Kenmore, it was never necessary to house significant numbers of evacuees as the local community proved very caring and very resourceful and people unable to return to their homes were quickly offered places to stay.

In the Moggill/Bellbowrie community which also services areas such as Pinjarra Hills, Pullenvale and Anstead the large population faired much worse.

Firstly they were also cut-off from all the surrounding communities.

The central shopping district of Bellbowrie was utterly inundated with nothing functioning left. This meant the destruction of the local supermarket, bakery, fruit shop, butcher shop and the like. Along with this a substantial number of homes were completely flooded, approximately 90 in number, and the area was without power. I also note this community has the highest proportion of 0 - 5 year olds of any community of Brisbane.

The community organised itself into an evacuation support centre in the Moggill Uniting Church.

The Rev Costa Stathakis, Andrew Solomon, Graham Barnard assisted by a large array of caring local people including members of the Country Women's Association, Rotary and Lions, set up what proved to be quite a major operation using the church buildings.

Stranded police officers including officers of the mounted police which is in that district and an array of other relatively senior police who were in the community at the time that it was cut-off formed a police command post within the evacuation centre and it appears from every single account that I have heard that this functioned in a way that was absolutely outstanding.

Two doctors who were similarly cut-off in the community set up a round the clock medical operation as the only medical centres in the community along with the local vet had all been inundated. Once again every single account I have heard speaks in glowing terms of the dedication and efforts of the medical staff and nurses who assisted them.

Similarly once I had established contact with this group I was able to get feedback from the community.

This particularly revolved around the fact that as all supermarket supplies had been destroyed by flood waters that there was concern particularly for families with young children and households that had taken significant numbers of evacuees including children revolved around supplies of basic food items and batteries for use in battery operated radios, torches and the like.

As with the other communities nobody was ever "in charge" in the normal sense we understand but the volunteers worked in such a cooperative manner that one would think the whole thing had a plan in place in the beginning.

My phone line continued to run hot particularly from members of the community in this area concerned about the lack of provision of supplies. The evacuation centre was NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE SUPPLIES TO BE TAKEN BACK TO FAMILIES OR HOUSEHOLDS EVEN THOSE SUPPORTING EVACUEES. People described to me how milk supplies were so low that only a glass of milk to be consumed on site was available even where households had children. In one case a lady describes being able to get only a couple tablespoons of powdered milk in a piece of gladwrap to take back to a family.

Whilst it is my belief that the community which shared its food and in many cases presented food for use of evacuees at the evacuation centre was not in danger from these food shortages but it was certainly the case that considerable fear was building in the community. This fear was reflected in anger in many of the calls that I received because people felt that their circumstances were not cared about. I had calls from places like Pullenvale that people were down to eating remaining tins of food and the like.

I think it is fair to say that one of the main concerns was the general lack of information. I think it is fair to say there was confusion about what, if anything was planned to support these communities. There was certainly great concern about how long they would be without power which in many cases meant there were issues around refrigeration, in some cases issues around water (as some places require power to operate their drinking water).

I had little idea as to how I would go about supporting these communities so I began, with the assistance of my volunteers, making contact with organisations in particular Disaster Management Queensland, the Brisbane City Council and others. It quickly became apparent to me that there appeared to be no planning in place for the support of substantial communities that were cut-off and without power and possibly cut-off for an extended period.

I must say that I found the experience of trying to obtain a food drop to the evacuation centres one of the most frustrating experiences I recall. Essentially at no point did I speak to anybody who appeared to have any idea about how this could be arranged or what would happen to these communities.

As my concern mounted and the concern of constituents who found me one of the few points of contact that was available to them I contacted Federal Member Jane Prentice to see if some assistance could be obtained through Federal agencies such as the Australian Army.

Jane Prentice put me in touch with Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan who kindly discussed the situation with me and I believe tried to assist us.

Despite all these efforts it was obvious that there was no imminent action on supplies to these communities and in particular to the Bellbowrie/Moggill community.

I see it as my job as the representative of these communities to do everything humanly possible to ensure their protection and safety.

I was able to source a donation of a twin engine helicopter and pilot from a generous donor who offered the service free and asked to remain anonymous publicly.

The State Member for Caloundra Mr Mark McArdle generously assisted by sourcing a helicopter load of the type of provisions that I had been made aware were required through the kind generosity of the Coles Supermarket in his electorate. The helicopter owner requested that I obtain police approval for the flight landing on the oval at Moggill State School for these relief supplies. This seemed to me that it would be just a formality as it would be impossible to imagine how somebody would refuse permission for needed supplies to be brought in under these circumstances. How very wrong I was.

I contacted Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart who of course and understandably was very busy and referred me to Deputy Commissioner Peter Martin who shortly after returned my call. To my utter astonishment and my astonishment to this day I was informed that the police would not permit donated supplies to be brought into this community by air.

I am sure as a result of my utter disbelief at this decision that Peter Martin thought I was very rude. This I may have been but my focus I believe rightly was on caring for my community and ensuring the evacuation centre had supplies that could be given to families with children, homes with the elderly or disabled or who had taken in evacuee families into their home.

I subsequently spoke on a number of occasions to Police Minister Atkinson who reiterated this position and who told me "we have a system in place we can't have people going off doing their own thing".

Whilst I am sure these gentlemen consider they were doing their job the entire relief effort in our area, including evacuations and care for evacuees, was done by people "going off and doing their own thing".

There was a degree of community anger in relation to the refusal to allow supplies to be brought in. Especially in view of the fact that I have had many reports of eye witnesses who saw a wealthy property owner bring in a helicopter without supplies on board for the purpose of taking himself out of the district. I can only presume that he worked on the principle that "it is often easier to ask forgiveness than it is to ask permission".

In subsequent discussions I was informed, and I can only presume as a result of media that I was able to obtain in relation to the isolation of the 25,000 people in their communities, that an army all terrain vehicle would bring in some supplies. The terrain in this area is very rugged and in fact in places quite remote and the vehicle did not arrive until much later than the stated time and when this vehicle did arrive it brought four cartons of milk and a supply of potato crisps and sweet biscuits which were not really the supplies that the community needed. It did however bring in some baby formula which was required.

Subsequently following what can only be described as quite considerable media interest some substantial amounts of supplies such as bottled water, cereals etc were delivered but only after the road had again reopened and the situation had begun to ease.

This is not to in anyway suggest that these supplies were not needed and put to very good use. Conditions out here remained very difficult with the loss of the Bellbowrie supermarket and severe shortages in the supermarkets in the western suburbs that people had to rely on with people often finding particular lines were unavailable. There were also no petrol supplies.

This was a particular problem for communities such as Karana Downs where people had a very long return trip to find fuel and food supplies in Brisbane.

A limited supply of fuel became available at the one service station at Karana Downs but this had to be limited to 10 litres per customer (in my view a very necessary restriction). It was necessary to tie up police resources at the service station because of the obvious problems particularly in a community where many people drive large four wheel drives of limiting people to such a small amount of fuel. This was the only method by which the broader community could have reasonable assurance of being able to get fuel to access the supplies they needed in Brisbane.

On this point in one of my subsequent conversations with Commissioner Atkinson where he asked what assistance our communities needed I pointed out the need to make fuel deliveries to this area a priority and this did appear to occur and I believe to have been the result of the Commissioner's efforts for which I and the local community are grateful.

Supermarket and fuel supplies

The run on panic buying at the Coles supermarket in Kenmore and on fuel supplies at the Freedom Service Station in Karana Downs are very instructive for future disaster planning in Brisbane's west. These events largely reflect the unique circumstances that we have large essentially metropolitan communities in Bellbowrie/Moggill and Mt Crosby/Karana Downs where the residents know that they are likely and frequently cut-off and in the event of any rain/storm/cyclone/flood or similar natural disaster and panic buying or hoarding can be expected in future.

The panic buying that led to serious unrest at the Coles supermarket at Kenmore denied many local residents the opportunity to stock up on a few essential items and left a serious bad taste that such behaviour would be a feature of our community.

The irony is that people buying large quantities of food in anticipation of being cut-off by flood waters were in most cases not going to have power and that any items of food they were purchasing requiring refrigeration were quite likely to perish.

It would be worth in consultation to put a plan in place with both service stations and supermarkets in the lead up to and in some cases the aftermath of natural disasters that a limit on purchases be put in place to ensure the whole community get access to supermarket or fuel supplies and that the processing of sales can be done expeditiously. A $50 per customer limit on supermarket sales would probably have prevented the disturbance that forced the closure of the Coles supermarket at Kenmore.

In all my comments it should not be implied that there is any criticism of the behaviour of Coles. In fact Coles behaviour and support for our community throughout and following the flood disaster was nothing short of remarkable given the service they provided to the customers of their Bellbowrie store and very extensive and valuable donations they made in support of the local community on quite a number of occasions.

Recommendation

That in the case of future natural disasters, particularly those where there is a degree of warning in western Brisbane that supermarket purchases and fuel purchases be limited to $50.

The siting of evacuation centres

As noted previously neither myself nor any other member of the community were aware of any official evacuation centres despite the fact that three unofficial centres were required to cope with the flood disaster.

The operators of the community based evacuation centre in the Moggill Uniting Church found that their requests for support were met with frustration and non-compliance because the agencies they contacted continually insisted that they were not on the list of official evacuation centres. Looking back now this looks to be absurd given that there were no evacuation centres officially. However this evacuation centre performed extremely well and an extremely valuable service despite it being an unofficial evacuation centre and being operated by community volunteers. The issue of centralised agencies looking to only support or in particular support official evacuation centres needs to be changed as a matter of urgency. Evacuation centres in a disaster arise where the local community sees the need for it. I again reiterate that my greatest fear out of the inquiry will be that decision making is centralised in a bureaucracy and moved away from the community based disaster management that was the most successful feature of the assistance rendered in my communities during the Brisbane floods.

Local disaster planning, which in my view should be conducted by local communities and not a central bureaucracy, should consider a number of potential evacuation sites. It is worthwhile to have an evacuation site that is used in principle so that the community will have a rallying point but it should always be stressed that depending on the type of disaster the community will make the best decision. For example in the event of fire there can be no certainty that a particular evacuation point would not be either threatened by fire or damaged. In the case of the Moggill Uniting Church, although this is a small building for the quite extensive purpose it was put to, it was found to be more suitable than the school hall because it contained a number of small rooms for a police command post, for a medical room, a counselling room, meals room and short term residential accommodation. This may not have been so successful in the school hall. Although the comment was made that the school hall next to the church would have been useful for families to sleep and receive their services from the church buildings enabling 24 hour operation without it interfering with their sleep.

Recommendation

That whilst indicative evacuation centres should be part of local planning communities should make a decision on the best available and in particular the safest evacuation centre depending on the particular type of disaster with which they are confronted. In any case once an evacuation centre is established it should quickly be accepted as the authorised evacuation centre regardless of what is on a list held by a central bureaucracy who in many cases may have little local knowledge.

Provisioning of evacuation centre

Provisioning proved to be particularly problematic. Firstly it appeared that no plan existed for the supply of provisions to large metropolitan communities that were cut-off and not intended for evacuation. When after considerable public and media attention provisioning was attempted (on

no significant scale until after flood waters had receded and roads were open in any case) it was haphazard to say the least. In one case badly needed torches were delivered to the Mt Crosby evacuation centre but no batteries. The batteries were delivered to the Moggill evacuation centre but with no torches.

In general local communities would be able to establish the priority for provisions based on the needs of their community but I attach as Appendix 1 a very detailed and thoughtful sample of provisioning including the quantities that should be considered of each provision into small, medium or large quantities and also the urgency indicated by the number 1 for urgent supplies. Note that some supplies that are not required in large numbers may still be among the most urgent supplies needed.

Evacuation centre services

The model of the evacuation centre at Moggill comprised a police command post, an SES command post, an information desk that was fully computerised. This enabled displaced persons to be registered and their whereabouts tracked so that assistance could be forwarded to them. It also allowed offers of accommodation to be received and recorded as well as the style of accommodation and what family type it would suit. This latter meant that despite some hundreds of people having their homes inundated at no time were more than about five families required to be housed in the evacuation centre with the rest being matched with billeted accommodation through the computer. Medical services including a limited pharmacy, doctors as available, registered nurses as available. A volunteers coordination area to produce order in the dispatch and tasks given to volunteers. A counselling area. An area for the preparation and serving of meals. An area for the receipt and distribution of food. Note food supplies were not available during the period which Moggill/Bellbowrie was cut-off but supplies subsequently trucked in proved of use because the local supermarket had been destroyed and only after those supplies arrived were distributions to needy families possible. An area for the storage of food and grocery lines such as cleaning products, insect repellent etc. An area for clothing and bedding distribution.

This all added up to an impressive operation but it also shows that the area chosen for an evacuation centre is complex and needs to fill a large number of roles.

Attachment 2 prepared by the operators of the Moggill evacuation centre demonstrates the functions of the centre and reflects on the type of facilities that are needed.

The Mt Crosby area functioned quite differently in that there being a police and fire station. These emergency services personnel operated from their own premises not from the evacuation centre but the underlying principles are similar.

Essential equipment for evacuation centres

As well as the type of supplies needed to render assistance to displaced persons or persons who have lost their homes the evacuation centre needs power and cooking facilities as well as good communication facilities.

A generator is desirable equipment. I am sure in most cases as occurred in Moggill generators were sourced by the kind support of caring members of the community who in some cases did without their generator to assist the evacuation centre but planning should include the availability of a generator and gas bottles for cooking.

Communication

The biggest problem in supporting the large isolated communities in the Moggill Electorate were communications as power was out, websites had limited use except for a few people who had some charge remaining in laptops. Mobile phones became problematic. Landlines in many cases were out and the lack of power meant that residents, unlike the rest of Queensland and Australia, were not watching the drama unfold in Brisbane therefore had limited knowledge of what was happening elsewhere and what the impact of that would be on support for their communities.

The whole issue of communication to my mind is central perhaps even more central than issues surrounding the planning for and establishment of evacuation centres and the like. Part of the great anxiety that occurred among many people in these communities revolved around the fact that they knew nothing about what was happening, what efforts were being made to reopen the road, how long the road would be closed for , how long power would be off, how extensive damage was etc. The fear in some cases led people to believe the worst and added to what amounted to considerable anxiety among many of the people I contacted during the flood.

Recommendation

That communication systems be put in place to help support and inform the communities that are expected to be cut-off during natural disasters. The communities of Moggill Electorate are very likely to be cut-off during future events and the ability to communicate information about the extend of damage, about possible ongoing dangers, about road openings and closings, power supplies and other essential services needs a resource much better able to communicate. In the absence of reliable information many people fell foul of disinformation which greatly heightened anxiety and concern in the community.

A recommendation that markedly improved information planning be available, at least at certain levels, to inform people about the status of power, damages, potential threats, road closures etc.

Warning systems

Whilst warnings of a flood descending along the Brisbane River were widely received there were still people who were unaware of the predicted flood peak until water entered their home. In general the warning of the flood peak appears to have been fairly comprehensive but the existence of people who were unaware until their home was inundated suggests that warnings could be improved. Warnings were not local but based on the Brisbane reach. The flood peak reaches us much earlier.

Huge negative for thousands of local residents was the lack of warning about other developments such as loss of power, when it would be lost, how long it would be lost for, road closures and more particularly road reopening and safety hazards related to particular areas from the natural disaster.

It is recommended that police and SES vehicles be fitted with loud hailers so that when no other method of communication appears to be available to the whole community at least the worst affected areas could be given relevant messages and warning by loud hailer.

Equipment

Given that the Moggill Electorate was cut into three, two components of which were islands equipment was never going to be adequate for the task. Evacuations and ferrying of certain residents was generally done by private resources, such as canoes and jet skis. This occurred in the Gem Road area of Kenmore, across the flooded Kholo Creek and Mt Crosby Road and across Moggill Road at Brookfield.

While it is tempting for a central bureaucracy to say for various reasons that evacuations and assistance of this type should be through official means the reality and strong recommendation is that this is completely unfeasible. There was one SES boat in an area that was cut in three by flood waters. It is recommended that SES, other emergency services and any local on the ground disaster committees have some information about what resources can be "commandeered" for use in an emergency such as the location of some generators, the location of some watercraft or boats, the availability of such things as satellite phones and the like.

To attempt to have a disaster organisation controlled centrally and equipped according to standard measures is doomed to failure and will certainly not respond to the range of threats that threaten our community. The only way of ensuring that necessary equipment can be brought into operation quickly in the event of future natural disaster is for those on the ground with responsibility for establishment and management of an evacuation centre to have an understanding of where within the community those materials and equipment can be found.

The Moggill Electorate

The only thing that is predictable about future disasters affecting the suburbs of the Moggill Electorate is that they will be unpredictable. A Brisbane River flood can differ from the flash floods that residents are more experienced with in the local creeks. Severe storms with extensive property damage such as occurred many years ago in Bellbowrie. Cyclone where building damage will not be restricted to inundation and of particular concern in parts of the electorate bushfire would all require a different response, would all require different actions and locations to render people safe.

This is further evidence of my strong contention that decision making must be made on the ground by local volunteers or emergency services professionals who are located locally and have local knowledge.

In the unpredictability of future events which might also include manmade events such as petrol tanker explosion or terrorist act in most scenarios is that suburbs would be cut-off in a large area that at the current time has only one access road and that communities would be isolated. Also in the array of natural disasters including storms, flash flooding, the Brisbane River flood and the like power is generally interrupted. Future planning needs to take into account not just the physical support of large communities that have been cut-off and will more than likely have no power but the provision of information to these communities. I believe people would have coped much better had they been better informed of what was happening in the rest of Brisbane and what efforts were underway to support and help those that needed it.

Post 1974 "flood information centres" didn't happen

Locals who were involved in the "wash up" following the 1974 flood particularly in the Bellbowrie area informed me that part of the post flood planning was that there were to be flood information centres. The local one for the Bellbowrie area was to be the Moggill State School. The flood

information centre would be manned by volunteer engineers. On a flood warning being issued the SES would supply to the flood information centre detailed maps and emergency supplies such as torches, radios, a generator, first-aid kits and information of a local nature so that people receiving the general flood warning could go and get specific information for their home and their personal response.

35 years later at the next flood of the Brisbane River this seems to have been forgotten.

In terms of local preparation the issue of a general flood warning for the Brisbane River below Wivenhoe does not meet the needs of many local communities. The 1974 planning (also pre-internet planning) appears to have been a practical way of ensuring that relevant local information was available for people to interpret what their response in their community should be to the issue of the general flood warning.

Final Recommendations:

1. The co-ordination and decision making for local disaster relief and assistance be local. External bureaucracies should support that local decision making. Any finding that control should be conducted or over-ridden by a centralised bureaucracy will fail and may endanger life.

2. There needs to be better pre-planning including a designated place in each of the communities that people are referred to as an information centre.

3. Establishing an evacuation centre and recognition of a place as an evacuation centre needs to be done based on the nature of the disaster. However a rallying point for the community should be locally known. Bear in mind that certain disasters may pose differing risks: eg what is high and dry and safe in a flood could be at risk in a bushfire event. I consider a major bushfire to be our number one threat to life.

4. Preparation needs to be markedly improved. There needs to be a flexible local plan. Knowledge of what resources could be obtained locally in the event that outside assistance is not available is essential.

5. Early warning can be vital. I acknowledge some good work in relation to SMS warnings but it was apparent that a substantial part of my community were not receiving those warnings. A clearer understanding of how early warnings are to be received and disseminated would be a significant advantage.

6. Early warnings should be "filtered" locally. For example, the predicted flood height of the Brisbane River in the city was different to the timing in Mt Crosby.

7. During a disaster there needs to be clear understanding as to where information can be obtained. It is to be expected that power would be lost in an area such as this in most forms of natural disaster. Local residents should be educated to have battery operated radios, know which radio station to listen to and know the location of a local rallying point for information and assistance. It should be recognised that central call centres and numbers might again be expected to struggle in a widespread disaster.

8. One potential disaster for our area would be a cyclone. Cyclone readiness is nowhere near the standard it is in North Queensland despite the fact that cyclones have been recorded this far south. If we had a cyclone in a population centre as big as Brisbane with many communities cut off, with many buildings damaged and many areas subjected to unpredictable flash flooding I think present systems of community preparedness and information provision would fail. Information on shelters is non existent.

9. Community leaders need to be better informed and educated about disaster readiness and response. I imagine that local Councillors are better informed than local leaders in other walks of life. However it is important to ensure that local community leaders in various roles should be kept in the loop about planning and response.

10. I have deliberately not made extensive comments in relation to centralised agencies because I only have local knowledge of our experience with them. There appears to be a somewhat confusing array of bureaucracies. I am still not totally sure who had final control between the Police, the SES, the Disaster Centre, the Council, the Army etc. Deficiencies are apparent in the co-ordination. Local police privately expressed concern about their problems in finding out who was in charge.

11. On a positive note the functioning of the evacuation centre in Moggill (as described in the body of my report) I think was very instructive. The setting up, the services that were provided, the type of provisions that were needed and the difficulties they encountered can act as a model.

Yours faithfully [redacted]

Bruce Flegg MP
Shadow Minister for Education and Training
Member for Moggill

Attachment 1
Attachment 2

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Moggill Uniting Church Flood Evacuation and Relief Centre

On Tuesday 11th January 2011, following information that the Brisbane River was likely to flood to levels similar to that of the 1974 floods, the Rev Costa Stathakis and some members of the Moggill Uniting Church initiated the establishment of a Flood Evacuation Centre at the Church.

Establishment of the Centre developed rapidly with SES and the Police setting up command posts. Within a 24 hour period, a full range of services were operating, including:

- Police Command Post
- SES Command Post
- Information desk to:
    - Register offers of accommodation, assistance or loan of equipment
    - Arrange accommodation for flood affected families
    - Provide information on services and the general situation.
- Medical services, including pharmaceutical support
- Coordinate volunteers to assist evacuation/clean-up tasks
- Counseling
- Meals
- Food receipt and distribution
- Clothing receipt and distribution

Once roads were open and Moggill/Bellbowrie was again accessible by road, services from Centrelink and Community Services were established at the Centre.

On Friday 21st January, the emergency situation at Moggill/Bellbowrie had improved to the point where the Centre was closed to all but Counseling, Centrelink and Government Community Services.

The Flood Evacuation and Relief Centre was very successful, thanks largely to the wonderful community spirit and the large number of volunteers offering their service. With the benefit of hindsight and experience gained during the emergency, a table is attached identifying some of the key activities undertaken at the Centre, highlighting those actions which worked well and some actions which could perhaps have been improved in the event we face another crisis event.

Attachment 1: Lessons Learned

Moggill Uniting Church Flood Evacuation/Relief Centre
Lessons Learned

Service	Role/Actions	Improvement
Police Command Post	• Provided critical law and order services. • Responsibilities were clearly defined though offered a very flexible approach with their support. • Provided excellent cooperation.	• Centre may have benefitted from more frequent situational updates from Police. • Supply of fuel for Police and Emergency Service vehicles.
SES Command Post	• Provided emergency services to the community and excellent support of the Centre. • Initially established at Church but later relocated to St Catherine's Catholic Church due lack of space. • Provided excellent cooperation.	• Though they provided excellent response, Centre needs to clearly understand the role and responsibilities of SES. • Though very resourceful, sometimes SES responsiveness appeared hampered by lack of resources/equipments.
Centre Operations	• Coordinated all but Police and SES services. • Liaison with Lions, Rotary, CWA and other community service bodies • Focal point for Public Relations, and Signage • Church was not an 'official' BCC recognized Evacuation/Relief centre	• Need to clearly establish responsibilities at the outset. • Need to understand capabilities of community service bodies (numbers, equipments, tasks) as initially not used effectively. • Need more than one phone/line to handle the volume of (principally outgoing) calls. • Need staff to 'man' the phones constantly. • Need one staff member responsible to coordinate PR/Media releases and signage • Need for early agreement between local Churches to improved co-operation, prevent duplication and share resources. • Access to a formal Disaster Recovery Plan would have provided for a speedier and improved initial set-up. • Key staff had regular briefings and updates but remaining volunteers would have benefited from regular updates. • Need to get Church recognized as official evac/relief centre if plan to do similar in future. • Shopping Centre alarm on evening of flood, though confusing, proved useful in alerting community. Consider permanent alarm?

Customer Service/Information Desk	• Maintained a data base of volunteers, offers of accommodation, offers of assistance or loan of equipment • Arranged accommodation for flood affected families • Provide information on services and the general situation.	• Need a policy for accommodating families with pets • Need a 'meet and greet' officer to direct public to correct service area.[worked well initially but none for second week] • Need continuity for compilation and oversight of database. • Need for improved control of loaned items and process to return items at conclusion of the crisis. • Notice Board detailing Fact from Fiction.
Medical	• Pool of Doctors, Nurses, Midwives, and first responders provided medical services, including minor surgery and pharmaceutical. • Worked very well.	• Secure storage of dangerous and controlled drugs proved difficult due lack of secure areas.
Counseling	• Pool of qualified counselors established and provided broad range of counseling services. • Excellent service provided.	• Lack of private counseling spaces provided difficulties
Kitchen/Meals	• Initially provided hot meals throughout the day for volunteers and flood affected members of the community. Later distributed meals to workers/volunteers during the clean-up.	• Need for continuous supervisor to provide overall coordination of kitchen/meals and volunteer kitchen staff. • Though ceased, there was ongoing need for some meals during second week of operations.
Supplies	• Order, receipt, storage, issue and dispatch of (non medical) supplies for the Centre. • Initially received clothing items but later handed over to Catholic and Anglican Churches due lack of space at Uniting Church to process. • Difficulty experienced in identifying and locating those most affected by flooding, such that supplies can be directed to most needing. • Coles provide bulk of food for distribution in area through Centre.	• Need a dedicated supplies manager from outset of operations. • Need for a prioritized list of essential supplies and recommended quantities to request in any crisis. [one has been developed based on experience of this exercise and is attached] • Need to register those seeking supplies, as experience showed many 'non-needy' sought supplies. • Coordinated door knock of all affected areas (when practical) may identify most needy. • Order sufficient supplies for 24hrs only and re-order/resupply daily.

Emergency Supplies Order Information for Moggill/Bellbowrie Evacuation Centre

	ORDER PRIORITY (1=ASAP)	CUSTOMER DEMAND	JAN 2011 QUANTITIES RECEIVED	SUGGESTED FUTURE ORDER QUANTITIES (5=HIGH,15=LOW)	NOTES
FOOD ITEMS					
ice	1	high	pallets of 100	5	
bread	1	high	boxes of 6 - 8 loaves	5	include small qty gluten free
fresh fruit & veg		medium		2	carrots, apples, bananas, potatos - to be broken into smaller bags for distribution
bottled water	1	high	boxes of 24x600ml	5	include water for workers
UHT milk - full cream	1	high	boxes of 8x1L	4	
UHT milk - soy		low		1	
tea/coffee/sugar		low	tea - boxes of 100 teabags; coffee - boxes of 6 jars of 100g; sugar - boxes of 6x2kg	2	suggest smaller boxes of tea bags
powdered milk		low	6 bags of about 2kg each	2	
tinned spaghetti	1	high	pallets of 24 cans	5	
tinned baked beans	1	high	pallets of 24 cans	5	
tinned meat (spam)		medium		4	
tinned tuna		medium		4	
tinned corn		medium		4	
tinned peas		medium		4	
family assorted biscuits (sweet biscuits)		medium	boxes of 9 or 12 packets	4	
saltines (savoury crackers)		medium	boxes of ?	4	
gluten free crackers		low		1	
tinned fruit (pears/peaches)		medium	pallets of 6 cans	4	
2 minute noodles		medium		3	
rice		low		2	can be split into smaller bags for distribution
pasta		medium		3	
jars of pasta sauce		low		1	
poppers/juice		low	boxes of 3x6x250mL poppers	2	
cornflakes		low		1	
dog/cat food - canned and dry		medium		2	
TOILETTRIES					
feminine products (pads/tampons)	1	low		1	
toilet paper	1	high	packets of 3x18 rolls	5	to be split into bags of approx 6 rolls
shampoo/conditioner		low		1	one type shampoo, one type conditioner
toothpaste/toothbrushes		low		1	
razors (male & female)/shaving cream		low		1	
deodorant (male & female)		low		1	
cakes of soap		low		2	
mosquito coils		medium	boxes of 6 coil units	2	
antibacterial hand sanitizer gel	1	medium		3	small individual bottles would be best
RID/aeroguard		high		4	include sensitive/kid friendly - necessity to prevent mosquito-borne disease

Emergency Supplies Order Information for Moggill/Bellbowrie Evacuation Centre

	ORDER PRIORITY (1=ASAP)	CUSTOMER DEMAND	JAN 2011 QUANTITIES RECEIVED	SUGGESTED FUTURE ORDER QUANTITIES (5=HIGH,15=LOW)	NOTES
BLACKOUT ITEMS					
butane camping stove & fuel cartridges	1	low		1	for long-term power outages WITH fuel
matches	1	medium		3	suggest not splitting boxes unless huge demand or low supply
candles	1	medium		2	not tea lights!
batteries (AAA,AA,C,D,6volt)	1	high		5	AA, C & D highest demand most torches run on C and D cells, and they only come 2 in a pack so most people needed at least 2 packs each.
torches	1	low		1	
CLEANING					
paper face dust masks		medium		3	for workers cleaning up & medical supplies
rubber gloves		high		5	thick rubber not cotton
paper towels		high		4	
dettol (personal antiseptic)	1	medium		3	for cleaning cuts
disinfectant		medium		2	
cleaning products eg: spray'n'wipe		medium		2	
garbage bags		low		2	
chux/cleaning cloths		medium		3	
dishwashing liquid (washing dishes)		low		1	
laundry liquid (washing clothes)		low		2	NOT powder - for hand washing where no power; people were washing flood-affected clothing for other people
BABY					
nappies	1	low		2	assorted newbown, toddler, crawler, walker, junior
baby wipes		low	boxes of 8x80	2	
formula	1	low		1	assorted newborn, 6mth+, 12mth+, soy, lactose-free, gold
jars of fruit baby food		low		2	4mth+ and 6mth+, fruit combinations only
OTHER					
Fuel/Petrol/Diesel	1	low		1	needed to support the emergency vehicles - police, SES, ambulance, volunteers in the event the fuel station is unavailable.

quantity notes:
assume 25,000 people in Bellbowrie, mt Crosby, Karana Downs, Moggill area affected and therefore serviced.
assume approx 4 people per household, therefore 6000 families.
assume 1 in 6 families come to refuge centre for support/help, therefore 1000 families to support.

produced by Tina Gorman and Annabelle Moore