

Warwick Flood Debrief

Thursday 6 January 2011 at 10.30am
Southern Downs Regional Council Administration Building,
Chambers, Warwick

JW

03/05/11
259

Date:

Exhibit Number:

QFCI

Present

Ron Bellingham	Southern Downs Regional Council
Rod Ferguson	Southern Downs Regional Council
Peter See	Southern Downs Regional Council
Trudy Fraser	Southern Downs Regional Council
Jody Collins	Southern Downs Regional Council
Tracy Vellacott	Southern Downs Regional Council
Janine Crawford	Southern Downs Regional Council
Brian Weeks	Southern Downs Regional Council
John Newley	State Emergency Service
Stewart Day	Queensland Police Service
Shane Reid	Queensland Police Service
Andrew Grafton	Queensland Police Service

Minutes

Peter See – Southern Downs Regional Council

Could have opened the Disaster Coordination Centre (DCC) earlier and advised QAS and QFRS earlier. A TMR representative in the DCC would assist with communications during an event. The DCC was very noisy at times, especially when 3 or 4 people were taking phone calls. Council needs to investigate the T Card system to track staff and perhaps EMQ can provide some advice on this issue. It would be useful to have a dedicated person in the DCC to organise rostering (to help with fatigue management) and track staff. QPS advise that they run 12 hour shifts. Backfilling of DCC administrative staff was not a problem, apart from key staff including Jody, Tracy, Peter and Brian.

The Mayor commented that he felt that the DCC did not activate too late.

It would be useful to have the DCC set up all the time (with forms, equipment, etc) so that the response can be timely. It was fortunate that Scots PGC were on holidays and were able to lend mattresses. It would be prudent to set up an agreement with Big W regarding the availability of mattresses in the event that Scots were not available.

An alternative Evacuation Centre to Slade School needs to be considered with Glennie Heights State School being a possibility. As the Warwick Town Hall is not a suitable venue for an Evacuation Centre, possibly investigate using Warwick West State School facilities (on that side of the river). The School of Total Education might be another option for an Evacuation Centre.

It is observed that there is a clear height difference between the OO Madsen and McCahon bridges. The Flood Study being conducted at the moment will provide much more information for future flood event planning.

List of positives included:

- Everyone committed including QPS, SES and Council, especially during the Highway traffic jam issues (Mayor appreciated efforts);
- QPS arranged for traffic to be stopped at Stanthorpe (therefore preventing further problems in the Warwick area);
- SES liaison worked well;

- Mayor commented that the relationship with QPS and SES was excellent;
- All agencies undertook preparatory work;
- Tracy organised media liaison well and used the Mayor to reinforce the messages;
- People made decisions as needed;
- Political input;
- Evacuation Centres worked well with Sheila assisted by Red Cross and the Warwick Lions Club – have received positive press and feedback;
- Local organisations had the ability to assist;
- Fatigue management for volunteers and Evacuation Centre staff and early warnings;
- Warwick East State School were notified.

Ron Bellingham – Southern Downs Regional Council

QPS needed to be part of the DCC but felt that at times it was too noisy for them as they would leave the room. Concerns that there were different sources and inaccuracies of road information during the event. Only one source is needed to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Shane Reid – Queensland Police Service

The DCC worked well as QPS needed to be in the room to keep up with the communications. The SES door knocking worked well but were caught out in some areas eg Council pensioner units. Needed earlier warning for travellers, possibly at the NSW border. TMR released information about the Highway opening, however this caused traffic problems. QPS need to liaise with TMR about the possibility of staggering the release of these types of messages to avoid further problems. QPS resources were stretched during the event as staff were also dealing with other issues.

Stewart Day – Queensland Police Service

The TMR 131 940 phone number should be used as a source for road condition information but this system had problems during the widespread floods. People were still calling QPS to gain information on road conditions.

Peter See – Southern Downs Regional Council

Brian was sending a list of road conditions to RACQ. There is a need to educate Council staff to advise Brian of road conditions so that accurate information is collated in one central location. Council needs to advise QPS and TMR of local road conditions and it would be useful to have one Council contact for this type of information.

The Mayor commented that information about NSW road conditions, particularly Highways was not readily available and would like to liaise with the NSW Road Traffic Authority about this for the future.

John Newley – Warwick State Emergency Service

The SES had some problems getting access to problem areas during the event. Fortunately they had prearranged staff to be located at Killarney. Suggest that Big W might be a good contact for distributing information to travellers. The SES put up signs at the Warwick Town Hall regarding the locations of Evacuation Centres as a lot of people were trying to find out information there.

Tracy Vellacott – Southern Downs Regional Council

Contact with local motels, service stations and the Visitor Information Centre worked well in distributing information to travellers. Stewart suggested that the public need to be educated to make their own plans during these events. Peter commented that permanent flood markers might be helpful for property owners and tenants to be aware of potential flood levels.

Andrew Grafton – Queensland Police Service

Passed on apologies from Greg Morrow and advised that he is very experienced with disaster situations. The District Disaster Management Group could have been put on standby and may have been able to assist with resources such as gaining access to mattresses for the Evacuation Centres. More community education regarding the use of the 131 940 phone number for road condition information needs to be conducted as QPS were swamped with calls of this nature. Traffic management during the event could have been improved.

Janine Crawford – Southern Downs Regional Council

Rainbow FM and 88 FM need to increase their promotion of the 131 940 phone number to the community (in addition to general flood information during the event). John advised that EMQ can assist with communications via their SMS alert system.

Brian Weeks – Southern Downs Regional Council

Council's stock of permanent signs needs to be improved. Special mention of David Crowe for his outstanding efforts during the event. Acknowledge that the Council region is Southern Downs, not Warwick and Stanthorpe. Ergon Energy involvement during the event was helpful. Would like an electronic noticeboard, however would need to access funding for this.

Stewart enquired about having access to a dedicated landline contact for QPS use during events.

Peter commented that he was thankful that flooding did not occur in the Stanthorpe area due to a lack of local knowledge and resourcing issues.

Jody Collins – Southern Downs Regional Council

Local recovery is in progress, including human/social, economic, environmental and infrastructure. QFRS Rural were an excellent resource during the event, particularly for access and communication in the rural areas. Concerns about the coordination of the Allora Evacuation Centre once the SES personnel left Allora. A Council staff member could be appointed to this role to ensure that there is one point of contact for liaison with the DCC.

John commented that following the floods the SES will undertake a recruiting process for new members. In addition to more members, the SES would benefit from the use of a small boat. Have discussed formalising the self-evacuation notification process using prepared forms and possibly symbols left at properties to prove contact had been attempted or made.