



IGEM *Connect*

Inspector-General Emergency Management

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Welcome to the latest edition of *IGEM Connect*.

I had the opportunity earlier this month to attend a two-day workshop in Melbourne which sought to develop a national flood warnings framework.

Convened under the umbrella of AFAC, the workshop included representatives from key agencies in most jurisdictions in Australia and sought to not only develop an agreed national flood warnings framework but also a behavioural intention matrix to guide warnings. Further, the workshop also included discussion and consideration regarding the design of warning messages and creation of message content and calls to action.

It was illuminating to hear other jurisdictions talk about their particular circumstances, challenges and approaches in this context.

Apart from highlighting the diversity of initiatives and actions in other states, the discussions also underlined to me the uniqueness of Queensland's hazard profile and our more prolific geographic and climatic challenges.

Practitioners in our State not only have to plan for the full spectrum of hazards, they often have to directly confront a wide range of them each season.

In the flooding sphere, the occurrence and immediate impacts of flash flooding are common over storm season. Yet often at the same time, practitioners in some of these areas must also consider and address flooding isolation for some communities - which can last for months - and associated issues such as re-supply and provision of utility services.

In addition, these same disaster management officers also annually have to deal with vast riverine flooding which can be both rapid on-set and slow on-set.

If you include the need to prepare for and manage the risk of coastal tide and storm surge, you start to get an idea of how broad our State's profile and the action required by practitioners can be, simply in one hazard.

Is it any wonder then that the disaster management arrangements and capability of individual groups and practitioners in Queensland are so advanced?

Importantly though, these broad and prolific disaster management challenges also shines a clear spotlight on the need for continuous improvement and for practitioners in Queensland to stay ahead of the game.

Encouragingly our on-going series of reviews have repeatedly demonstrated that a culture of continuous improvement is being developed within Queensland and that recommendations and improvement activities are being acted upon.

Tropical Cyclone Debbie Review Update

A key focus for my Office over the past few months has been a review into the effectiveness of Queensland's disaster management arrangements in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

I was tasked by Police, Fire and Emergency Services Minister Mark Ryan in April to undertake the review, to ensure that we have a robust approach in Queensland to continuous improvement across all aspects of Queensland's disaster management system.

As part of the review I was asked to ensure disaster management good practice arising out of Tropical Cyclone Debbie were identified and shared; that lessons learnt were captured; and that common themes for improvement were adopted.

To most effectively approach the task, the review focussed on three key impacts of Tropical Cyclone Debbie, namely direct cyclone impact in the Mackay and Whitsundays region; rapid on-set weather conditions after the cyclone's coastal crossing in the Logan, Gold Coast and Scenic Rim area; and slow on-set flooding experienced in the Rockhampton district.

My Office has now completed the review.

Can I extend my sincere thanks to the 80 organisations and agencies my Office consulted and engaged with as part of the review, along with the 1200 members of the public who participated in our commissioned telephone survey. The review, its findings and recommendations were built on your input.

As far as findings and recommendations go, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on specifics of these prior to any public release. What I can say in this regard however is that I am encouraged with the way the system performed, broadly, during Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

I also firmly believe that the findings and recommendations included in the review will act as a catalyst for further disaster management excellence in Queensland.

Minister Ryan specifically asked that the report be completed in a timely manner to enable consideration of any recommendations ahead of this year's storm season. Key stakeholders have been kept informed throughout the process and I am confident that there is already work underway that will go towards addressing our findings and recommendations.

Townsville Capability Review

Regular readers of *IGEM Connect* will be aware that my Office is undertaking a progressive program of capability reviews within disaster districts across the State.

We have now begun our third capability review, this time focussing on Townsville.

Following on from similar reviews at Warwick and Mackay, my Office is undertaking an in-depth assessment of the Townsville District Disaster Management Group and all related local governments and related local disaster management groups and councils to deliver effective disaster management outcomes, measured against the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland.

The review will focus on plans, arrangements, processes and systems used within the District to meet future challenges.

Importantly, the capability review is forward-looking, focussing on strengths and development areas in the context of the anticipated future risk environment. It is not an assessment of past performance.

The review will provide the combined Townsville disaster district with outputs that will assist the disaster management groups and local government to improve their disaster management arrangements. The outputs will include a tailored 'summary of observations' report for all disaster management groups; a final capability report and combined improvement strategy for the disaster district; if required, community focus group reports for the local government authorities; and a facilitated workshop to develop a shared improvement action plan.

We expect to complete the review by the end of the year.

State Disaster Management Plan Review

I have previously advised of my Office’s review of the State Disaster Management Plan’s alignment with legislated provisions under the *Disaster Management Act (2003)*, through the lens of the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland and disaster management guidelines.

We worked with State agencies and district and local disaster management groups between December 2016 and April 2017 as part of the review to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the State Plan and also looked at good practice in disaster management planning from other jurisdictions.

I can advise that this review has been finalised and a report has been provided to Minister Ryan and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner and Chair of the State Disaster Management Plan Recrafting Committee, Katarina Carroll.

Commissioner Carroll has provided assurance that the review findings will be incorporated into the recraft of the State Plan.

White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation

I am a proud supporter of White Ribbon Australia and accordingly my Office is working with the Public Safety Business Agency towards White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation, along with 14 other Queensland Government agencies.

The White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation program accredits workplaces taking active steps to prevent violence against women and support those in and outside the workplace affected by domestic and family violence.

Our participation in this program strengthens our support for our people affected by domestic and family violence and underpins our support of the Queensland Government commitment to ending domestic and family violence in our communities, our homes and our workplaces.



The IGEN team participating in the Darkness to Daylight Challenge



Care packs donated to the Cityhope Care 'New Thing' initiative.

We support our staff affected by domestic and family violence in the form of paid leave, flexible work practices, counselling through our employee assistance provider and referral to community support services. We also support those affected in our community through our involvement in initiatives such as the 2017 [Darkness to Daylight Challenge](#), donating care packs to the Cityhope Care 'New Thing' initiative and supporting [White Ribbon Night](#).

In the coming months we will continue to take more steps towards White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation, including a staff survey in September 2017 to measure changes in our understanding and awareness of domestic and family violence.

For more information on ways you or your organisation can support and be involved in this important initiative, see the [White Ribbon Australia](#) site.

Evacuation Management Arrangements Review Update

As many of you would know, my Office was undertaking a review of evacuation management arrangements when we were tasked in April to review the effectiveness of disaster management arrangements relating to Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

This led to the evacuation management arrangements review being temporarily suspended while the TC Debbie Review was undertaken.

Fortuitously, aspects of the work the Office had completed regarding evacuations proved beneficial in undertaking the TC Debbie Review as evacuations formed part of the preparation and response to the event.

In recommending the evacuation management review, it is therefore not surprising the report will build on the TC Debbie event and lessons.

The evacuation management arrangements review is expected to be completed prior to the next storm season.

Review of Recovery Arrangements

The area of “recovery” has been identified in both assurance and review work as an area of interest by my Office.

The recovery phase was identified as a particular area of interest after Tropical Cyclone Marcia and Tropical Cyclone Nathan in 2015, with post review reports for each event identifying a number of recommendations relating to recovery arrangements.

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services also undertook their own reviews into operations relating to community recovery and the human and social elements of recovery following both events.

And while not a specific focus of my Office’s TC Debbie Review, the issue of recovery - both in the planning and transition stages - was identified by a range of stakeholders.

As a result, my Office is undertaking a review into recovery arrangements to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of recovery governance one year after the permanent appointment of the State Recovery Policy and Planning Coordinator.

The review will include an assessment of any gaps in that governance, the filling of which could lead to better local level community recovery and outcomes.

The review is expected to be completed prior to Christmas.

Lexicon Project Update

Significant work has been undertaken over recent months regarding the development of a disaster management lexicon in Queensland.

As mentioned in the previous edition of *IGEM Connect*, the Lexicon Working Group is assisting the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience to review the Australian Emergency Management Glossary.

The working group has taken on the mammoth task of reviewing the entire Glossary - all 1600 terms - and is currently working on breaking down the content to determine those terms which are key to the disaster management lexicon and testing their best-fit for Queensland’s situation.

As I previously noted in this newsletter, my Office recently had the opportunity to review the effectiveness of disaster management arrangements relating to Tropical Cyclone Debbie. Findings from this review have helped inform several other pieces of work currently being undertaken by my Office, including the Queensland Lexicon project.

In undertaking the TC Debbie Review, my Office came across incidents where misunderstanding of terminology continued to be a challenge when communicating with the general public, particularly around evacuation and sheltering terminology.

The Lexicon Working Group met last month to discuss the best way to tackle this continuing problem and has committed to ascertaining the communities’ understanding (or misunderstanding) surrounding these terms. In addition, the working group is also looking at working with other interested partners - including other state and local government agencies - to ensure the best possible definitions are achieved.

The DM Lexicon Working has also welcomed two new members to its ranks - Inspector Peta Miller-Rose, currently with Rural Fire Services Group Queensland and Ipswich City Council’s Matthew Pinder, representing the Queensland Disaster Management Officers Network.

I look forward to observing the different perspective and experience both bring to the Working Group.

Research Framework

It has been exciting for me to watch the Disaster Management Research Framework gain momentum.

As part of the broad range of work undertaken to develop the framework, my Office has been working with our colleagues from the disaster management and tertiary sectors to identify a range of questions, research themes and gaps regarding disaster management in Queensland. So far, these include:

- Governance and doctrine, policy and legislation into practice
- The role of the legal system in disaster management
- Disaster resilience
- The professionalisation of disaster management
- Risk assessment and modelling under changing and complex environments
- What is 'best practice'
- Community messaging and warning systems
- Immersive technologies
- Exercise development and evaluation

It has also been encouraging to see the Research Community of Practice (CoP) continue to grow. With 90 researchers now on our list, the CoP is a key part of the Framework and building collaborations. We are continuing to find researchers across many disciplines including law, creative industries, social and political policy as well as the traditional science and engineering areas.

As part of my Office's direct work with tertiary institutions, we are in the process of recruiting our third intern under the IGEM/QUT Engagement Program. The student intern will complete a project over the summer period. Keep an eye out for more details in upcoming editions of *IGEM Connect*.

My Office is also supporting further work in the immersive technology and disaster management space with QUT, building on the findings of the report produced by our 2016-17 intern Caitlyn Ward. This is an exciting and rapidly expanding area that we will continue to investigate on behalf of the sector.

To enhance research collaboration, we are continuing to develop an online space. My Office is in the process of seeking feedback from both sectors on some model web pages and resources. We are also developing a body of work to help further research translation. This will involve short videos of researchers talking about their work and what it means for the disaster management environment. This all contributes to promoting continuous improvement in disaster management.

We welcome your feedback and ideas to help implement the Research Framework. If you would like more information or to join the Research Community of Practice please contact IGEM.

Re-appointment as Inspector-General Emergency Management

Finally, I need to advise that I have been re-appointed to the role of Inspector-General Emergency Management for a new three-year term.

Together we have achieved many positive things since 2014 and I am confident that the next three years will be even more fruitful in developing and enhancing emergency management in Queensland.

Until next time.

Iain MacKenzie
Inspector-General Emergency Management

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