

# IGEM *Connect*

Inspector-General Emergency Management

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## **Disaster management arrangements in Queensland are in a strong position.**

Our job however is to continually look for ways to improve the system further and make sure these opportunities are known and can be acted on. This includes the identification and sharing of good practice examples.

In support of this, a raft of activities are currently being undertaken to boost confidence and efficiency within the disaster management system.

## **Reviews**

### **The Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management has been very active in reviewing aspects of disaster management in Queensland.**

Over the past 12 months, the Office has undertaken five reviews, designed to significantly enhance disaster preparation and response capability.

The largest of these was the Callide Creek Flood Review, which looked at events surrounding the February 20 Tropical Cyclone Marcia flooding of Callide Creek and whether the operation of the Callide Dam near Biloela exacerbated flooding. The review was released in June and identified a number of areas for improvement, which will lead to better outcomes for residents.

All 13 of the review recommendations were accepted and agencies are currently working to implement these.

In May, prior to the release of the Callide Creek Flood Review, the State Government commissioned the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management to undertake an independent review into the warning systems provided by Seqwater and SunWater to communities downstream.

This review is currently being finalised.

The remaining three reviews came directly out of consultation with state agencies and local government.

Last year I wrote to all Directors-General of State agencies and Chief Executive Officers of Local Government seeking the identification of issues or gaps within disaster management arrangements.

The responses submitted covered the spectrum of disaster management arrangements. After careful consideration however, three were identified as being most appropriate to commence the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management's program of strategic reviews.

The three reviews were:

1. State Agency Integration at Local and District Levels
2. Cyclone Sheltering Arrangements
3. Local Government's Emergency Warning Capability

The purpose of the State Agency Integration review was to understand the drivers for, and barriers to, integration of State Government agencies in Queensland's disaster management arrangements, with a focus on participation of agencies in local and district disaster management groups.

The Cyclone Sheltering Arrangements Review considered storm surge and cyclones in relation to reducing risk to the community, in particular the vulnerable. The focus of the review was to identify good practice risk reduction, planning and public engagement activities to provide assurance of community safety.

The purpose of the Local Government's Emergency Warning Capability Review was to assess the ability of local disaster management groups and councils to issue contextualised, fit-for-purpose, consistent and accurate warnings through all phases of events.

A number of my staff travelled the state far and wide speaking to a selection of you as part of the reviews.

If the recommendations contained in these reviews are fully implemented, I am confident Queensland's already strong disaster management arrangements will be enhanced even further.

## Annual assessment of disaster management effectiveness

**Very shortly, the disaster management plan assessment process will be finalised for 2015.**

Local and district disaster management groups will have until the end of this month to undertake assessment against specific indicators of the Standard, representing a much more streamlined process than over recent years.

All entities with disaster management responsibilities will have the opportunity to undertake an assessment against the standard in 2015-16.

As part of the three tiers of assurance activities, my office is developing a 'prioritisation tool' that will allow assessments against the key outcome statements. This will allow entities the flexibility to demonstrate effectiveness, irrespective of their size or operational complexity.

A pilot of this assessment will be undertaken involving four councils, in conjunction with the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Queensland Police Service.

The pilot follows an initial trial with State Disaster Coordination Group members earlier this year, which provided good learnings regarding delivery and the type of questions.

## Standard for Disaster Management Regional Workshops

**My office will host a series of workshops across the state over coming weeks to assist stakeholders in understanding and applying the Standard for Disaster Management, including the Implementation Guides.**

The workshops will be held at regional locations throughout Queensland and will involve practitioners from across local, district and state levels.

The workshops are designed to build understanding and capability regarding the Standard and promote engagement among practitioners.

They will involve opportunities to work through functions and responsibilities against the Standard's Shared Responsibilities and 14 Components, at a local and district level, and will also discuss the findings and recommendations arising from the recent reviews conducted by this Office, and what they mean to the local context.

In addition, the workshops will provide opportunities to work through parts of the Standard of local interest, and focus on the results of the recent DM plan assessment. We will also work through the Implementation Guides, and the relationship between the Standard and the Guidelines.

The one-day workshops will run until early November and will be held at Gympie, Mackay, Fraser Coast, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, Mount Isa and Brisbane. Details surrounding workshops for the South West are yet to be confirmed and my office is willing to facilitate more in any location.

## Privacy

**One of the most difficult issues within the disaster management sector revolves around the ability to safely share information, ensuring its accuracy during emergencies.**

All agencies participating in disaster management activities should, as far as legally possible, share data sets whether or not the relevance is immediately obvious.

Through its interoperability and innovation stream, the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management has been working to find ways to make this easier for all stakeholders without imposing unrealistic costs or mandating technologies.

The work thus far has shown that there is no silver bullet but rather highlighted the need for a methodical approach to the underlying issues. Over the past year the work has formed into four lines of activity:

- Establishing the context
- Raising awareness
- Leveraging wider policy
- Facilitating a solution

Working with the Office of the Information Commissioner, the Office of the IGEM has commissioned a short guide on the subject. While some restrictions still apply, disaster managers may be interested to know that the privacy principles provide generous flexibility in a range of circumstances.

Most notable is that personal information can be used where it is reasonably necessary to lessen or prevent a serious hazard to life, health, safety or welfare.

The full guide can be found at: [www.igem.qld.gov.au/innovation/privacy.html](http://www.igem.qld.gov.au/innovation/privacy.html)

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