

IGEM *Connect*

Inspector-General Emergency Management

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Welcome to the latest edition of IGEM Connect.

The cyclone season is now technically over and I can't recall a quieter season in all of my years of being involved with emergency management.

I read a news article during the past week which quoted a Bureau of Meteorology climatologist as saying that if we don't get any more cyclones between now and June 30, it will be the quietest season since satellite records began in 1970.

While the more subdued season has been welcomed, it has been pleasing to see many agencies utilising the down time well and actively undertaking exercising, planning, stakeholder engagement and preparation activities for next season.

We already know El Nino is in rapid decline and there is a high probability of La Nina conditions next summer, and so the current volume of preparatory work is crucial. An encouraging example of this has been the lead work by Seqwater to implement the first recommendation of the Review of Seqwater and SunWater Warnings Communications.

Last month saw significant consultation on improved warnings for communities at risk of impact from dam outflows. Staff from my office observed a series of workshops that started the discussion about better sharing the responsibility for warning communities and more clearly identifying accountabilities.

At all three workshops, there was a pleasing level of attendance from local government and disaster management groups and agencies, and I look forward to seeing these productive conversations continue to build safer communities.

DMO Network Forum

I had the pleasure earlier this month to host an inaugural forum in Cairns for the Disaster Management Officer's Network.

The forum was held over three days and brought together approximately 60 disaster management officers, local disaster coordinators and agency representatives from State Government, non-Government and the private sector to provide an opportunity for coalface practitioners within councils to connect; keep abreast of developments in disaster management arrangements and associated doctrine; and to share and develop skills, knowledge, resources, ideas and innovation.

Apart from a number of excellent panel sessions and presentations, including an outstanding forum dinner key note speech by local government elder statesman and former Noosa and Sunshine Coast Mayor Bob



Abbott (pictured, courtesy of Michael Dickinson), it was particularly pleasing to observe the extent and depth of out-of-session disaster management conversation among the delegates.

The DMO Network has grown within its six months of operation to currently involve 51 councils and 70 registered members.

It is my vision to eventually see an effective and highly active peer-driven network which incorporates officers from each of the State's 77 councils.

In support of this, I have already flagged my desire to host another forum next year, in addition to the regular network teleconferences.

Prioritisation Tool

One of the topics discussed at the DMO Network Forum related to the implementation and performance of the Emergency Management Assurance Framework.

My Office has been developing a Tier 1 assurance activity which we have called the Emergency Management Prioritisation Tool. The tool is in the final phase of development ahead of its release this month.

The tool will provide you with an opportunity to undertake a health check of your disaster management arrangements using the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland. It will also help you to prioritise actions to improve capabilities and functions of your disaster management group.

The tool will be available as an MS Excel survey that you will be able to download in future from the IGEM website at www.igem.qld.gov.au. An online version is also under development.

Central West and Emerald Visit

I was fortunate to be able to travel to Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine and Emerald last month to meet with mayors, CEOs and others regarding emergency management and the work of IGEM.

While there, I was struck by the severity of the drought, particularly between Longreach and Winton, and the devastating impact on residents in the region.

While it has been pleasing to see individuals and organisations in other parts of the State rally to support the region with donations and social and service aid, I was made aware of a downside of this kindness for the local economy through an associated negative impact on business activity and regular strain on State and local service provision.

I can see very close parallels between the drought-support situation in the Central West and those encountered by councils and State agencies after floods and cyclones when kind-hearted individuals and organisations in other parts of the State provide goods, clothing and items en masse.

While the intention is noble, the kindness can create a whole round of unwanted additional problems and issues for councils and State agencies, already busy with primary response and recovery responsibilities.

Capability Review

As many of you will be aware, a review team from my Office has been working with stakeholders of the Warwick disaster district, including the Warwick District Disaster Management Group and the Local Disaster Management Groups of Goondiwindi and Southern Downs, on a capability review.

The review has now been completed and a draft report which contains a recommendation for an improvement strategy has been provided to the chairs of each group.

My team facilitated a day-long workshop in Warwick with more than 30 representatives from the three disaster management groups. The workshop provided an opportunity to consider the improvement strategy, agree how it may need to be done, when, and who needed to be involved.

We will be undertaking more of these reviews across other disaster districts over coming years. To support this plan, I have tasked an officer, independent from the review team, to evaluate the methodology and products of the review to allow for broader Statewide application.

These capability reviews are forward-looking and assess the individual and collective ability of disaster management groups to meet future challenges. The reviews do not make an assessment on past performance, rather they focus on strengths and development areas in the context of the anticipated future risk environment.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

A big thank you to all who participated in our annual customer satisfaction survey in November last year.

The Office received a satisfaction rating of 83%, once again exceeding our target of 80%.

It was also encouraging to see that IGEM Connect is also being well received, with more than 80% finding it readily accessible, easy to read, relevant and informative.

We also received some helpful suggestions for improvement and very encouraging words from many of you.

Where we continue to excel	Where we made significant improvement	Where there is still room for improvement
Polite, respectful, professional, approachable, helpful and knowledgeable staff	The information or advice given by the Office helps stakeholders to improve their business	Listening and understanding customer needs.
Reports are easy to access, clear and provide useful information and recommendations	Research made available or commissioned by the Office was useful	Ensuring assurance activity engagements are timely, clear and useful.

I would strongly encourage you to contact me or the Office at any time throughout the year if you have any further suggestions or advice on how we can improve our work to better support you to do yours.

The Office can be reached via email at info@igem.qld.gov.au or by calling (07) 3227 6588.

Until next time.

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www.igem.qld.gov.au