



# Disaster Operations

Overview  
of  
Activities

January  
to  
June  
2009





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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Minister for Emergency Services activated the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements on four occasions and the State Disaster Relief Arrangements once, for natural disaster events that impacted Queensland during this period. Due to the high threat imposed by Tropical Cyclone Hamish to the east Queensland coastline and the effects of a major maritime oil spill, the Premier and Minister for Emergency Services declared a Disaster Situation under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* on two occasions.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) was activated on seven occasions outside normal business hours to support operations relating to Tropical Cyclones Charlotte, Ellie and Hamish, as well as for operations connected with the Pacific Adventurer oil spill, southeast Queensland flooding, East Coast Low and the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. The SDCC Watch Desk also assisted in numerous minor operations that occurred state-wide but did not warrant formal out of hour's activation of the SDCC.

An active monsoon trough combined with Tropical Cyclones Charlotte and Ellie produced very heavy rainfall, which resulted in extensive and prolonged flooding across North Queensland from early January to early March. Flood warnings commenced on 2 January 2009 and continued until 7 March 2009. The highest monthly January rainfall on record was recorded at a number of locations. The overall extent and magnitude of the flooding in this region was estimated as the second biggest in more than 100 years, only second to the record flooding in 1974.

Due to extensive road closures, an unprecedented number of resupply operations were conducted, which resulted in over 500 tonnes of food, medical and essential supplies, as well as approximately 211,000 litres of fuel being transported to isolated communities. Most operations were conducted by aircraft but due to some landing areas being unserviceable, barges and State Emergency Service (SES) floodboats were also used.

There were no visits to Queensland by nuclear powered warships.



***A resupply operation during the flooding in Northwest Queensland***





## STATE DISASTER COORDINATION CENTRE

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was involved in the following operations during this period:

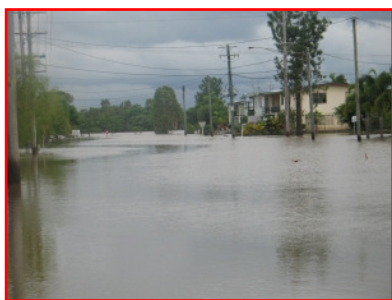
### NW Qld Monsoonal Floods and Tropical Cyclone Charlotte - January 2009

Severe monsoonal flooding and two tropical cyclones affected north and west Queensland over the month of January and early February 2009. On 11 January 2009, the weather system which had produced the heavy rainfall and associated flooding in North West Queensland since 3 January developed into Tropical Cyclone Charlotte, which crossed the coast near the Gilbert River mouth on the morning of 12 January 2009. Heavy rainfall associated with the rain depression and an active monsoon trough occurred over the catchments of the already flooded Gulf Rivers. Highest monthly January rainfall on record was received at a number of stations in the Gulf, Northern Goldfields and Upper Flinders, Channel Country and Northwest districts, along with record high daily rainfall from some stations in the northern, central and far western districts. Some of these sites surpassed records previously set in January 1974 during Tropical Cyclone Wanda.



The flooding had serious impacts on the local communities in the Gulf area and caused extensive cattle losses. The small town of Karumba was isolated from the beginning of January until early March before supplies could be trucked in, which required numerous resupply operations by air and sea of essential supplies, fuel and mail.

### Tropical Cyclone Ellie - February 2009



Tropical Cyclone Ellie made landfall near Mission Beach in the early hours of 2 February 2009 causing the Herbert River to rise beyond 12 meters and flood the township of Ingham in Hinchinbrook Shire. A significant part of Ingham was cut off for several days by flood water. SES volunteers, along with low security prisoners, assisted with the clean-up operation. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) provided 4,500 ration packs to Ingham residents and established a bulk aviation fuel supply at Ingham Airport to allow disaster relief flights to continue in the area. As a pipeline that supplied Karumba with potable water was

washed away, the ADF installed and operated a water purification plant from late February to early May. Forty local government areas were activated for disaster relief assistance in Queensland for the Monsoon flooding, Tropical Cyclone Charlotte and Tropical Cyclone Ellie.

### Tara Storms - February 2009

On Sunday 15 February 2009, a severe storm affected the township of Tara, within the Dalby Regional Council, South West Queensland region. On Thursday 19 February 2009 the Minister of Emergency Services approved the activation of State Disaster Relief Arrangements to address the personal hardship needs of affected persons in Tara.

### Tropical Cyclone Hamish - March 2009

On 5 March 2009, a tropical low intensified to become Tropical Cyclone Hamish in the Coral Sea. TC Hamish then commenced on a southeast track parallel to the Queensland coast and intensified over the following days to a Category 5. Evacuations were required at the Whitsunday Island Group, Heron, Lady Elliott and Fraser Islands. On March 11, TC Hamish weakened to below tropical cyclone intensity and was downgraded to a low. Counter Disaster Operations costs were incurred by Local Governments and Department of Community Safety in preparation for response and recovery operations. Eight local government areas were activated for disaster relief assistance in Queensland.



### Pacific Adventurer Oil Spill - March 2009

On 12 March the container ship "Pacific Adventurer" lost 31 shipping containers of Ammonium Nitrate overboard whilst the ship was experiencing heavy weather east of Moreton Island. The heavy sea conditions were induced by ex TC Hamish. A significant oil spill also occurred from the "Pacific Adventurer" affecting beaches and foreshores from Point Cartwright and Kawana in the north to Moreton Island in the south. A disaster situation was declared for the coastal waters and beaches, land and waterways adjacent to coastal waters within the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and Redcliffe Disaster Districts, under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*. The Australian Defence Force deployed two Huon Class mine hunter ships to assist in the detection of the missing containers.

### Tropical Cyclone Jasper - March 2009

TC Jasper formed from a low in the Coral Sea east of Cooktown on 24 March and was monitored closely as it tracked south parallel to the east Queensland coastline. By the 26 March it started to decay back to a low and track towards New Caledonia.

### North Coast Flooding - April 2009

On 2 April 2009, heavy rainfall caused major flash flooding that affected the Sunshine Coast and Hinterland. Operations in response to this event included evacuations of persons from Noosa National Park. There was also damage to roads and bridges and inundation of a number of homes. Fraser Coast, Sunshine Coast and Gympie Regional Councils were activated for disaster relief assistance.



### Ashmore Reef - April and May 2009

On 16 April 2009, there was an explosion and subsequent fire onboard a vessel that was under escort by the Royal Australian Navy, in the vicinity of Ashmore Reef. Consequently, Emergency Management Australia (EMA) activated the national plans COMDISPLAN and AUSBURNPLAN that evening. 44 people required medical care as a result of the incident, and seven of these were transferred to Brisbane for treatment.

### East Coast Low - May 2009



A strong upper level low located over south-east Queensland produced damaging winds, heavy rainfall and abnormally high tides in mid May 2009. Many areas of the Sunshine Coast recorded 24-hour rainfall totals above 250mm on 19 May. As the system moved southwards there were cases of recorded rainfall over 400mm across southeast Queensland from 19 to 21 May. During this period 6,508 calls were made to the SES 132 500 number. The extreme rainfall levels caused rapid flash flooding, which swamped cars and properties. Strong winds brought down trees and powerlines with

over 60,000 premises losing power and one person killed by flying debris on the Gold Coast. A combination of normal high tides and swells up to seven metres together with strong onshore winds resulted in significant beach erosion along exposed coastal areas. About 2,000 people involved with the 2009 Toyota Fishing Classic on Fraser Island, were requested by Queensland Parks and Wildlife to leave the island early due to the high seas and expected inundation of low lying areas. NDRRA relief measures were activated for restoration of essential public assets, counter disaster operations, disaster relief assistance scheme and concessional loans to small businesses for 12 local government areas in South East Queensland.



## **Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 - April 2009 to current**

On Friday 24 April the Australian Government's Department of Health and Aging, National Incident Room (NIR) was notified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of cases of outbreaks of a new strain of swine influenza viruses in the USA and Mexico. Since the outbreak thousands of people have contracted the H1N1 virus all over the world. To date the worst affected locations in Queensland include Cairns, the Gold Coast and Brisbane. EMQ continues to support Queensland Health with their response to the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

On 28 May, Queensland Health confirmed that three crew members on the cruise liner Pacific Dawn had tested positive for H1N1. As a precautionary measure to minimise the risk of the virus spreading through Queensland's major tourist centres, the ship with about 2,000 passengers cut short its 10 day cruise to North Queensland and berthed at the Hamilton cruise ship terminal in Brisbane. Prior to disembarking all passengers and crew were screened, with any symptomatic cases being swabbed and provided with masks and a course of anti-viral medication. The SDCC assisted in the coordination of response arrangements for the screening of passengers.

On 4 June, EMQ coordinated the distribution of health information leaflets to all airline passengers with children arriving in the State from Melbourne following the State of Origin game. The response followed concerns over the higher rate of infections in Victoria increasing the risk in Queensland.

On 7 June, the Dawn Princess cruise ship also docked at Hamilton Wharf, Brisbane with some passengers displaying influenza-like illness however no cases of H1N1 were confirmed.

## **Avian Influenza - ongoing**

The SDCC has been receiving Situation Reports from the Australian Government on the status of Avian Influenza since 29 January 2004. The SDCC continues to maintain a watching brief.

## **Bureau of Meteorology**

Disaster Operations has a very close relationship with the Bureau of Meteorology, as Queensland has a high frequency of severe natural phenomena affecting communities throughout the State.

During the period January to June 2009, 2,058 weather advices were received from the Bureau. 1,756 were warnings that required monitoring and notification to affected regions by the Watch Desk Officer. These warnings were for phenomena such as Flood, Severe Weather, Tropical Cyclone and Storm Tide.

An additional 302 reports were received from the Bureau but generally required minimal or no action as they were routine reports such as Coastal Waters Wind Warnings, Gale/Storm Warnings for shipping, Tropical Cyclone Outlooks, Tropical Cyclone Information Bulletins and Flood Summaries.



## Summary of Resupply Operations

Widespread flooding over northwest, central and far north Queensland resulted in 28 resupply operations being coordinated by the State Disaster Coordination Centre. Additionally, a number of Local Governments conducted their own operations which were typically by light aircraft or mustering helicopters to isolated homesteads in their area. The total movement of supplies was over 500 tonnes and approximately 211,000 litres of fuel.



## State Level Resupply Operations

Date	Destination	Cargo	Method	Kilograms
8 Jan	Burketown	Food and medical supplies	Aeroplane	1,305
9 Jan	Doomadgee	Food	Aeroplane	582
19 Jan	Normanton	Food and medical supplies	Aeroplane	11,706
22 Jan	Normanton/Karumba	Food	Barge	7,071
22 Jan	Mornington island	Food	Aeroplane	4,005
23 Jan	Coen	Food	Aeroplane	3,500
27 Jan	Georgetown	Food	Helicopter	1,000
28 Jan	Property near Chillagoe	Food	Helicopter	560
28 Jan	Mount Isa / Burketown	Food	Aeroplane	1,845
29 Jan	Mornington Island	Food	Aeroplane	965
29 Jan	Mornington Island	Food	Barge	17,867
3 Feb	Doomadgee	Food	Aeroplane	580
3 Feb	Sling lift across flooded Einasleigh River	Food and Fuel	Helicopter	18,880
4 Feb	Mornington Island	Food and Fuel	Barge	50,611
4 Feb	Doomadgee	Food	Aeroplane	300
5 Feb	Three properties near Mt Garnett	Food	Helicopter	210
5 Feb	Normanton	Fuel/Food	Aeroplane	36,000
6 Feb	Burketown	Food	Aeroplane	2,622
10 Feb	Einasleigh River	Fuel	Helicopter	46,440
10 Feb	Doomadgee	Food	Aeroplane	1,001
10 Feb	Mornington Island	Food	Aeroplane	1,477
10 Feb	Coen	Food	Aeroplane	3,329
12 Feb	Muttaburra	Food and medical supplies	Aeroplane	280
12 Feb	Burketown	Food	Aeroplane	2,262
18 Feb	Sling lift across flooded Einasleigh River	Food and Fuel	Helicopter	123,731
23 Feb	Doomadgee	Food	Aeroplane	535
25 Feb	Normanton	Fuel	Barge	83,000
27 Feb	Kowanyama	Food and Fuel	Aeroplane	15,672
<b>Total:</b>				<b>437,336</b>





**DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS**

The Minister for Emergency Services activated Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements four times during this period. There was one activation of the State (funded) Disaster Relief Arrangements.

**Queensland Monsoonal Flooding and Tropical Cyclones Charlotte and Ellie January – February 2009**



Monsoonal flooding activity commencing on 3 January 2009 in North West Queensland, Tropical Cyclone Charlotte (11-12 January 2009) and Tropical Cyclone Ellie (2 February 2009).

Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements were activated for Restoration of Essential Public Assets, Counter Disaster Operations, Disaster Relief Assistance Scheme, Concessional Loans to Small Businesses, Concessional Loans to Primary Producers (specific Local Government areas), Freight Subsidies (specific Local Government areas)

The Local Government areas affected were:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Aurukun Shire Council              | Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council       |
| Barcaldine Regional Council        | Isaac Regional Council                   |
| Barcoo Shire Council               | Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council       |
| Blackall - Tambo Regional Council  | Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council  |
| Boulia Shire Council               | Longreach Regional Council               |
| Burdekin Shire Council             | Mackay Regional Council                  |
| Burke Shire Council                | Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council          |
| Cairns Regional Council            | McKinlay Shire Council                   |
| Carpentaria Shire Council          | Mornington Shire Council                 |
| Cassowary Coast Regional Council   | Mount Isa City Council                   |
| Central Highlands Regional Council | Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council |
| Charters Towers Regional Council   | Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council     |
| Cloncurry Shire Council            | Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council      |
| Cook Shire Council                 | Richmond Shire Council                   |
| Croydon Shire Council              | Tablelands Regional Council              |
| Diamantina Shire Council           | Torres Strait Island Regional Council    |
| Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council | Townsville City Council                  |
| Etheridge Shire Council            | Whitsunday Regional Council              |
| Flinders Shire Council             | Winton Shire Council                     |
| Hinchinbrook Shire Council         | Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council        |





### Tara Storms, 15 February 2009



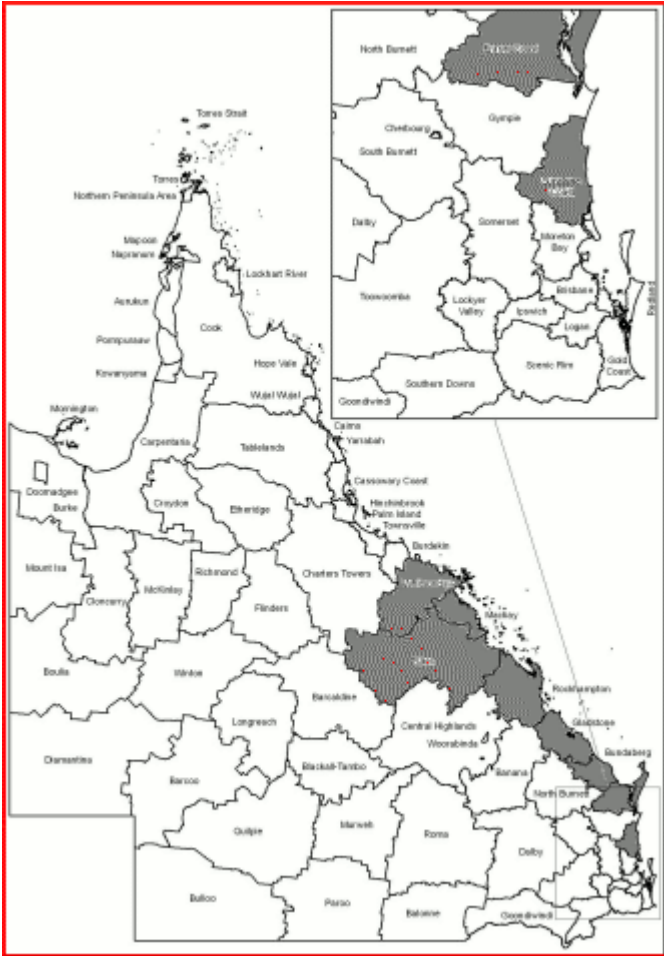
Severe storm activity on 15 February 2009.

The State Disaster Relief Arrangements (SDRA) were activated for the Disaster Relief Assistance Scheme.

The Local Government area affected was Dalby Regional Council.



### Tropical Cyclone Hamish, 5 – 11 March 2009



Tropical Cyclone activity on 5 – 11 March 2009 in coastal communities.

Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) were activated for Counter Disaster Operations.

The Local Government areas affected were:

- Bundaberg Regional Council
- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Gladstone Regional Council
- Isaac Regional Council
- Mackay Regional Council
- Rockhampton Regional Council
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- Whitsunday Regional Council



## Sunshine Coast, Gympie and Fraser Coast Flooding, April 2009



Heavy rainfall caused flooding activity in April 2009 in Sunshine Coast and Gympie.

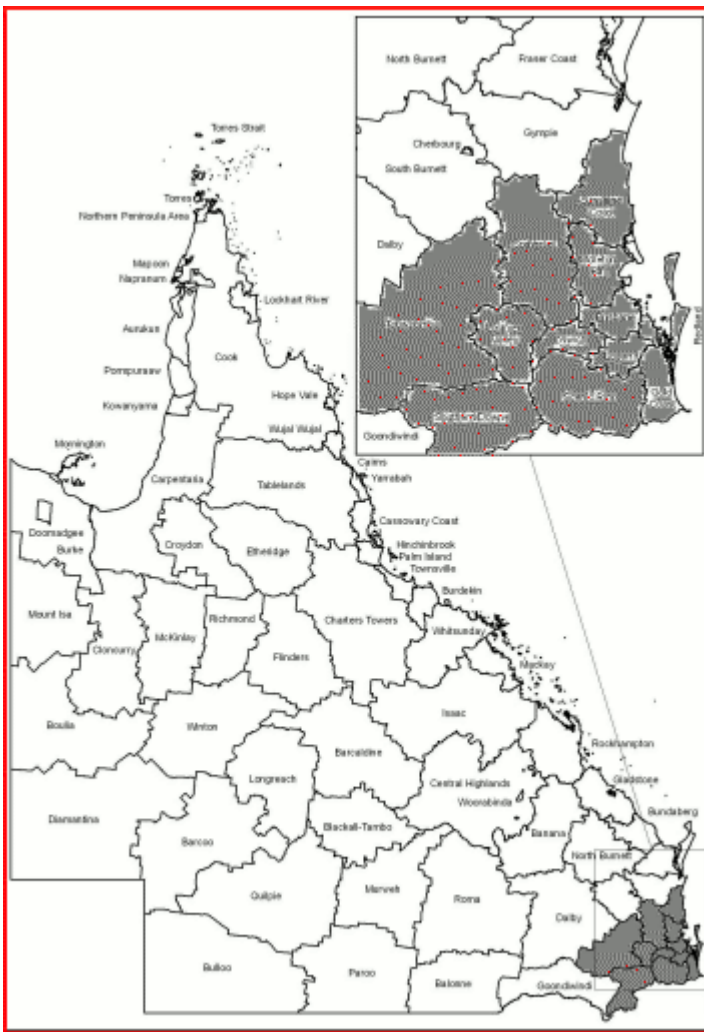
Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) were activated for Restoration of Public Assets, Counter Disaster Operations, Disaster Relief Assistance Scheme, and Concessional Loans to Small Business.

The Local Government areas affected were:

- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- Gympie Regional Council



**South East Queensland Low, May 2009**



A strong upper level low located over south-east Queensland produced damaging winds, high rainfalls, flash flooding and abnormally high tides in May 2009.

Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) were activated for Restoration of Essential Public Assets, Counter Disaster Operations, Disaster Relief Assistance Scheme, and Concessional Loans to Small Businesses.

The Local Government areas affected were:

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Brisbane City Council           | Redland City Council            |
| Gold Coast City Council         | Scenic Rim Regional Council     |
| Ipswich City Council            | Somerset Regional Council       |
| Lockyer Valley Regional Council | Southern Downs Regional Council |
| Logan City Council              | Sunshine Coast Regional Council |
| Moreton Bay Regional Council    | Toowoomba Regional Council      |





## NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP PROGRAM

Disaster Operations is the lead agency for coordinating Nuclear Powered Warship (NPW) visits to Queensland ports for crew rest and recreation purposes, however there were no visits during this period.

## TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Disaster Operations maintains an active role in organising and conducting disaster management activities at a State level.

### State Disaster Coordination Centre Training

To provide a surge capability during protracted operations, Disaster Operations has been conducting regular training sessions for EMQ and other departmental staff who are interested in assisting the SDCC during operational periods. A number of planned training sessions were cancelled due to the high operational tempo between January and June.

On 20 January 2009, training was provided to members of the State Disaster Coordination Group on the use of the Task Tracking system and portal used by the SDCC.

On 3 March 2009, an operational feedback session was conducted with 31 departmental staff to explain operations that had been conducted up to this point and the lessons learnt.

### External Training

Several Disaster Operations staff attended internal and external training activities and courses as part of their professional development and succession planning.

Date	Number of Staff	Course	Location
6-9 Apr	1	EMA Extension - Emergency Planning Course	Rockhampton
28 Apr	3	Travel Management System	Brisbane
8 May	2	Project Management	Brisbane
19 May	1	Advanced Project Management	Brisbane
20-22 May	1	SharePoint Training	Brisbane
26 May	1	Project Management	Brisbane
25-29 May	1	EMA Extension - Exercise Management	Brisbane
29 May	1	Advanced Microsoft Outlook	Brisbane
4 Jun	1	Ministerial Correspondence	Brisbane

### Exercise Ausnami – 15 June 2009

Exercise Ausnami was the culmination of the four year Australian Tsunami Warning System (ATWS) project. It included all jurisdictions over two days on 15-16 June. Queensland participated in the first day of the exercise and the SDCC processed a series of warnings related to a hypothetical tsunami threat. The exercise was a valuable test of SDCC SOPs and the draft Queensland Tsunami Notification Protocol. Importantly, the SDCC successfully passed on all messages to the pre-determined distribution lists. Several improvements have been made to SDCC procedures as a result of the exercise and many other agencies involved in the process have also reported improvements in their procedures following the exercise.



## STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENTS

A successful trial was conducted using a modem connected to a high frequency radio as an alternative means of sending and receiving data.

### Workshop Contribution

Disaster Operations staff actively participated in the following workshops:

- Marine Users Tsunami Workshop – Brisbane
- Leadership Forum – Coolumb
- Mass Accommodation Planning – Brisbane
- Tsunami Workshop – Thursday Island

### Committee Contribution

Disaster Operations staff were also actively involved in supporting the following committees:

- Australian Tsunami Working Group
- Counter Terrorism Training and Exercise Management Committee
- Disaster Management Alliance Management Group
- Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires and the Operations Subcommittee
- National Emergency Warning System Steering Group
- Port of Brisbane Corporation Mutual Aid Group
- Queensland Emergency Operations Centre Project Control Group
- Queensland Flood Consultative Committee
- Queensland National Plan State (Oil Spill) Committee
- Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee
- Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee Coastal Inundation Sub-Committee
- Senior Executive Management Team
- South East Queensland Disaster Management Advisory Group
- State Community Recovery Committee
- State Disaster Coordination Group
- State Disaster Coordination Group Working Group
- State Disaster Management Group
- Workplace Health and Safety Governance Committee



## Official Visits

Disaster Operations hosted official tours of the State Disaster Coordination Centre and gave presentations to the following agencies.

- Secretet Australia
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (two occasions)
- Queensland Health
- Ugandan delegation of senior disaster managers
- Petrie State Emergency Service