Emergency Management EMQ Queensland

Disaster Operations

Overview of Activities

July to December 2008

Queensland Government
Department of Emergency Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Minister for Emergency Services activated the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements and the State Disaster Relief Arrangements on one occasion each, for natural disaster events that impacted Queensland during this period. Due to a landslip at the Gap, Brisbane and potential risk to nearby houses in November, the Minister also declared a Disaster Situation under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) was activated on four occasions outside normal business hours to support operations relating to the Hendra Virus, storm damage, potential reception of Australian Citizens following the Mumbai terrorist attack and involvement in Exercise Mercury '08. The SDCC also operated during normal business hours in response to a number of smaller operations such as localised storm damage and flash flooding events. Officers from the newly formed 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.

Although the 2008/2009 tropical cyclone season officially started 1 November 2008, an active monsoon trough did not form across far north Queensland until late December, which is not uncommon. Heavy rainfall caused some road closures in the Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York areas, but there were no resupply operations to isolated communities during this period.

The central and southern parts of the State were impacted by a series of severe storms during November and December. These storms brought widespread damage to parts of Brisbane and the south-east, and to Baralaba, a small community in central Queensland.

There were no visits to Queensland by nuclear powered warships.

Photographs taken after the Severe storms which swept through Brisbane and the south east on Sunday 16 November

STATE DISASTER COORDINATION CENTRE

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

Hendra Virus – July 2008

Laboratory results on Tuesday 8 July confirmed three horses from at a veterinary practice at Redlands on the outskirts of Brisbane had tested positive for Hendra Virus. Quarantine was in effect from 7 July until 25 August. Two people were also confirmed as infected with the virus, one of whom later died. A further three horses were found to be infected with the virus at Proserpine, which was quarantined from 14 July until 12 September.

An independent review prepared by AusVET Animal Health Services for the Director-General, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries found that the two incidents were the result of separate exposure events and were managed separately as two different incident responses.

132500 Failure – November 2008

On Friday 7 November, the SDCC received notification from the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES) that they were experiencing issues with the SES 132500 number. The issue was with the Telstra Speech Locator, which was not working and resulted in callers being told that the line was busy and asking them to phone back later, instead of transferring calls through. That evening, a line of thunderstorms had caused some damage in central Queensland, however, because of the fault callers were unable to request assistance from the SES.

Queensland Storms and Associated Flooding – November 2008

Severe storms swept through Brisbane and the south east on Sunday 16 November from about 4.00 pm. The storms cut through suburbs to the west of Brisbane from north to south, particularly affecting the suburbs of The Gap, Keperra, Ferny Hills, and Arana Hills. Hail fell on Mt Tamborine, the Gold Coast hinterland, and at Beaudesert and Ferny Hills. The storms were the first in a series that impacted south east Queensland from 16 to 22 November, and which covered an area from central Queensland down to the New South Wales border. Floods developed as a result of the heavy rain and affected parts of the south east including Ipswich, the Gold Coast, and some suburbs of Brisbane.

As a result of significant damage across much of southeast Queensland, the Minister for Emergency Services activated Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. Due to a landslip at the Gap, Brisbane and potential risk to nearby houses in November, the Minister also declared a Disaster Situation under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

Mumbai QRECEPLAN – November 2008

A series of terrorist attacks occurred on 26 and 27 November in Mumbai, India. Approximately ten locations were included in the attacks carried out across the Indian capital. Emergency Management Australia's Incident Management Facility (IMF) was overseeing reception arrangements into Sydney for several hours before Queensland's assistance was requested. The Queensland Reception Plan was activated, as Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) Brisbane Regional staff established a reception point at Brisbane airport. The SDCC received/forwarded intelligence to/from key agencies as required.

Baralaba Storms – December 2008

On Sunday 7 December a severe storm affected the township of Baralaba within Banana Shire in the Fitzroy/Central West Queensland region. There were reports of hail and other storm damage to many private homes and community buildings including Baralaba Hospital, Ambulance Station and School. The Department of Communities identified one household as suffering financial and/or personal hardship and distress and as a result the State Disaster Relief Arrangements were activated.

Summary of Resupply Operations

No resupply operations were undertaken during this period, as Queensland has not experienced sufficient rainfall this 'wet season' to isolate communities for an extended time. However, it is anticipated that resupply operations of essential foods will probably be conducted in the New Year, as road closures associated with normal monsoonal rains prevent delivery trucks reaching some remote communities.

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 effecting communities throughout the State.

During the period July to December 2008, 337 weather warnings were received from the Bureau, which required monitoring and notification to affected regions by the Watch Desk Officer.

An additional, 769 reports were received from the Bureau but generally required no or minimal 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.

DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

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

Queensland Storms and Associated Flooding – November 2008

Severe storms swept through Brisbane and the south east between 16 and 22 November.
The storms formed a series that impacted south east Queensland, and which covered an area from central Queensland down to the New South Wales border. Floods developed as a result of the heavy rain and affected parts of the south east. This resulted in damage to roads and infrastructure.

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements were activated for
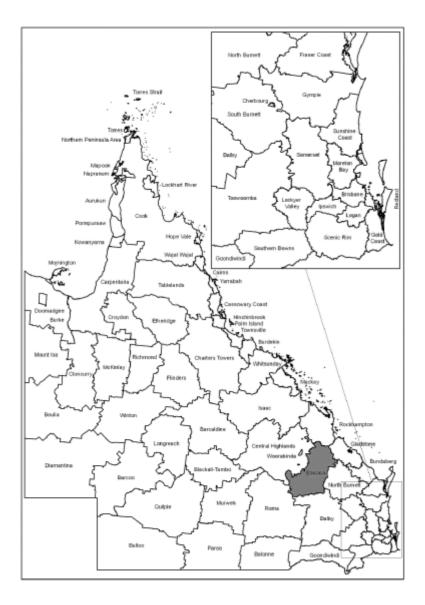Counter Disaster Operations; Disaster Relief Assistance Scheme;
Restoration of Essential Public Assets; Associations Natural Disaster Relief Scheme; and
Concessional Loans to Small Businesses for Carry-on and Re-establishment Costs.

The Local Government areas affected were:

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

Baralaba Storms 7 December 2008

On Sunday 7 December 2008 a severe storm affected the township of Baralaba within the Banana Shire Council, Fitzroy/Central West Queensland region. There were reports of hail and other storm damage to many private homes and community buildings including Baralaba Hospital, Ambulance Station and School.

State Disaster Relief Arrangements were activated for Counter Disaster Operations, and the Disaster Relief Assistance Scheme.

The Local Government area affected was:

- Banana Shire 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.

The Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear) is an Australian Government inter-departmental committee, responsible for validating the berths that are used during visits by Nuclear Powered Warships. The Panel revalidated all Queensland berths following a detailed assessment by the Technical Working Group of this committee, which was conducted in early November as part of the biennial revalidation process.

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 DES divisional 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 July and December, however, 96 staff did attend in-house training sessions.

Exercise Mercury '08

The State Disaster Coordination Centre activated for this multi-jurisdictional counter terrorism exercise, which ran continuously over 14 and 15 October. EMQ regional staff and other departmental staff were also active during the exercise. A wide range of federal, state and local government agencies were involved.

Exercise Pacific Wave 2008

The State Disaster Coordination Centre participated in the national Exercise Pacific Wave 2008 on 29 October 2008. This was a Pacific country-wide tsunami warning and communication exercise, with the aim of evaluating and improving the effectiveness of tsunami warning centres. The Bureau of Meteorology used the new enhanced tsunami warning service following a tsunamigenic earthquake scenario occurring near Tonga.

STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENTS

As the State Disaster Coordination Centre moved to a 24/7 operation from July 2008, the six recently appointed Watch Desk Officers attended an intensive two-week induction course in June. The training covered all aspects of the Queensland Disaster Management System, Emergency Risk Management and SDCC standard operating procedures. Participants were also required to take an active role in a number of simulation exercises, which were based on real events.

Disaster Operations staff were also involved in the following activities:

Workshop Contribution

Disaster Operations staff actively participated in the following workshops:

- Emergency Management - Enhanced Tsunami Warnings, Melbourne, 17 September
- Emergency Coordination Centre Forum, Canberra, 21-22 October
- Kenneth James McPherson (KJM) Symposium, Brisbane, 5 November

Committee Contribution

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

- Australian Tsunami Working Group
- Brisbane Port Safety Organisation
- Catastrophic Disasters Working Group
- Community Safety Working Group
- Counter Terrorism Training and Exercise Management Committee
- DES Special Operations Managers
- Disaster Framework Reference Group
- Disaster Management Alliance Management Group
- Emergency Warning Systems Working Group
- Equine Influenza Control Group
- Gladstone Port Safety Organisation
- Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires and the Operations Subcommittee
- Mass Gatherings and Events Network
- National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee
- Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee
- Port of Brisbane Corporation Mutual Aid Group
- Public Safety Communications Reference Group
- Queensland Counter Terrorism Committee
- Queensland Emergency Operations Centre Project Control Group
- Queensland Flood Coordination Committee
- Queensland National Plan State (Oil Spill) Committee
- Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee Coastal Inundation Sub-Committee
- SAFER Steering Committee
- Senior Executive Management Team

- South East Queensland Disaster Management Advisory Group
- SSQ Disaster Framework Reference Group
- State Community Recovery Committee
- State Disaster Coordination Group and the SDCG Working Group
- State Disaster Management Group
- State Disaster Mitigation Committee
- State Disaster Mitigation Committee Working Group
- Traveller Information Working Group