

City Solutions e-Library

CITY SOLUTION: Establishment of an Independent Flood Review Board

City:	Brisbane
Name of Department/Agency:	Brisbane City Council
Name of Implementing Mayor:	Lord Mayor Graham Quirk
Classification:	Urban Environment, Climate Change & Disaster Management

Issue

In January 2011, Brisbane experienced the second-highest flood in the past 100 years, after the January 1974 flood.

The flood had a significant impact on the city's infrastructure, assets, transport, waterways, parks and community areas. With an estimated damage bill in excess of \$440 million, it will take three years of recovery work for Council to repair and rebuild what the flood waters damaged.

Following the January 2011 flood event, Brisbane City Council (Council) established the independent Flood Response Review Board (Review Board) to review Council's response to the natural disaster. The review was separate to the State Government's Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, looked at all aspects of response to the state-wide floods. A copy of the Review Board report was provided to the Commission of Inquiry.

Goals and Objectives

An opportunity to gather learnings from the Brisbane January 2011 flood event existed and on the 21 January 2011, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane appointed the Review Board to review Council's response to the flood event during the period Sunday 9 January to Saturday 22 January 2011.

Laws, Regulation, and Jurisdiction of Solution

No legislation or regulatory changes were needed to establish the Review Board. Council's response to the flood event was governed by the Queensland Disaster Management Act (2003).

Partners, Resources, Cost, and Lifecycle

Implementation:

The Review Board looked at Council's initial response to the flood between Sunday 9 and Saturday 22 January 2011, to determine the effectiveness of Council's disaster management plans, procedures, roles and responsibilities.

The Report addressed the Terms of Reference in five Sections:

1. Examined the characteristics of the flood and the resultant levels including a comparison against the Q100 flood level and an explanation of terms relating to the probability of flooding occurrence and defined flood events and levels
2. Dealt with the effectiveness of Council's disaster management arrangements including preparation, response and recovery
3. Considered the effectiveness of Council's response to the flood event including the actions in inundated areas, the establishment of evacuation centres, the organising and tasking of volunteers for the clean up, and waste and debris collection and disposal.
4. Looked at the impact of the existing planning regulations in flood affected areas.
5. Dealt with the effectiveness of flood prevention and stormwater infrastructure and the reasons for Council's riverine infrastructure failures.

An independent external contractor was hired as the Review Board Coordinator and Secretariat. The external contractor supported the Review Board during meetings, collated the Review Board's report and had sole secure access to all documentation and communication relating to the Review Board.

City Solutions e-Library

Independent consulting engineers assisted the Review Board to collect feedback from Council employees, Councillors and a limited number of flood-affected Brisbane residents.

The review activities included:

- facilitated debrief sessions
- review of Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) information (logs and other documentation)
- briefing reports from business units if available
- interviews of Council persons (including the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive Officer, Incident Controllers and LDCC personnel, Regional Incident Management Team commanders and peer executives)
- interviews of key external stakeholders
- attendance at CEO debrief session
- limited interviews with a representative sample of residents across the inundation area

Partners, resources, cost and lifestyle:

Timeline of key events

21 January	The Flood Response Review Board was established
24 May	Flood Response Review Board's report released
24 June	<i>Brisbane City Council Flood Response Review Action Plan</i> released
1 August	Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report released
16 August	<i>Brisbane City Council January 2011 Flood Action Plan</i> released

City Solutions e-Library

All resources were external to Council. The below types of external agencies were sourced.

- Secretariat and coordinator – independent external contractor
- Design – the Board provided a concept brief for a design company
- Sub-editing/proof reading – proof reading services were provided directly to the Board. The Board decided which edits to accept/reject.
- Online tagging – formatting of the final word/PDF report in order to display on line.
- Printing – printing and delivery of the final report
- Legal review - independent review of the final report prior to printing.

Outcomes

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry released an interim report on the 2010/2011 flood event on 1 August 2011. The interim report examined all levels of government and all aspects of response to the state-wide floods, and made 175 recommendations to improve flood preparedness before the next wet season. Many of the Commission of Inquiry interim report recommendations for local government were already being acted upon as part of Council's Flood Action Plan. An addendum was added to the Flood Action Plan, listing the 74 recommendations relevant to Council and how they would be addressed and the update document, [Brisbane City Council January 2011 Flood Action Plan](#), was released on 16 August 2011. In addition, the [Brisbane City Council 12-month Flood Recovery Report](#) details the work undertaken by Council in the 12-months following the flood event.

Lessons Learned / Conclusions

Key items worthy of note for the establishment of an independent Review Board are:

- the provision of a secure and separate office for independent contractor,
- secure Network drives for draft reports and information to be stored, and
- a secure mailbox to communicate with the Review Board.

City Solutions e-Library

The Review Board used the information gathered to produce a report that enabled Council to capture key lessons from the flood event. The report documented observations and made recommendations on amendments to plans, procedures, roles and responsibilities. It also provided advice for improvements for Council's disaster management arrangements and response to future events. The Flood Response Review released the report '[Brisbane Flood January 2011 Independent Review of Brisbane City Council's Response 9-22 January 2011](#)'.

The Lord Mayor released [Brisbane City Council Flood Response Review Action Plan](#) (Flood Action Plan) to address the 53 recommendations in the Flood Response Review Board's report. The Flood Action Plan details how Council will implement improvements to disaster management arrangements and the time frames for completion. The purpose of this work is to ensure that Council and the city of Brisbane are better prepared for natural disasters in the future.

Contacts

Name: Craig Evans
Title: Executive Manager
Dept: Disaster Response and Recovery, Brisbane City Council
Email: Craig.Evans@brisbane.qld.gov.au
Tel: 07 3043 5500

Source/ Additional Information

<http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/community/community-safety/disasters-and-emergencies/types-of-disasters/flooding/index.htm>