

# Annual Report 2018-19

## About the Queensland Disaster Management Committee

The QDMC is chaired by the Premier of Queensland, or her nominee, and comprises a core group of Ministers, supported by their Directors-General (Assisting Officials) and assisted by other Ministers, senior officers, and representatives from other government agencies (from all three levels of government) and non-government organisations (NGOs) as required. Additional support is provided through the State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG), the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) and the Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee (QTCCC).

The QDMC serves as the disaster management policy and decision-making committee for Queensland. Its role is to ensure the development and implementation of effective disaster management for the State and to provide clear and unambiguous senior strategic leadership in relation to the four phases of disaster management: prevention, preparation, response and recovery (PPRR). The QDMC allows direct Ministerial participation in the strategic management of disaster events, resulting in faster, better-informed decision-making during a disaster event.

Secretariat support is provided by the Queensland Police Service, with additional support from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

### Governance

The QDMC is established under section 17 of the Disaster Management Act 2003 (the DM Act) and its functions are prescribed in section 18 and include:

- Develop a strategic policy framework for disaster management for the State;
- Ensure effective disaster management is developed and implemented for the State;
- Identify resources inside and outside the State that may be used for disaster operations;
- Provide reports and make recommendations about matters relating to disaster management and disaster operations; and
- Prepare a State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP).

### Members:

- Premier and Minister for Trade (Chair)
- Minister for Fire and Emergency Services
- Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services
- Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport
- Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors
- Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations
- Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
- Minister for Transport and Main Roads

### Attending Officials:

- Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works
- Director-General, Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

- Director-General, Department of Education
- Director-General, Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Under Treasury, Queensland Treasury
- Director-General, Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs
- Director-General, Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
- Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Reconstruction Authority
- Director-General, Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Chief Health Officer, Queensland Health
- Commissioner, Queensland Police Service
- Commissioner, Queensland Ambulance Service
- Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Emergency Service

Observers:

- Inspector-General Emergency Management
- Chief Operating Officer, Local Government Association of Queensland
- Chief Operating Officer, Public Safety Business Agency

2018-19 Meetings

Ordinary meetings

- One (1) meeting - 20 November 2018

Extraordinary meetings

- Twenty-five (25) meetings – 29 March 2019; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 22 February 2019; 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14 and 16 December 2019; and 26, 27, 28, 29 (2 meetings), and 30 November 2019 (2 meetings).

## The Year in Review

### **September 2018**

#### ***Strawberry Contamination - 9 September 2018***

- On 9 September 2018, needles in a strawberry punnet from a supermarket at Strathpine were found by a shopper. Further contaminated punnets of various brands were discovered across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. Additional cases of copy-cat contamination also occurred. Queensland Health activated the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre (SHECC). The SHECC moved to Stand Down on 3 October 2018. An arrest was made by QPS in relation to the contamination on 11 November 2018.

#### ***Indonesia Tsunami and Earthquake - 28 September 2018***

- On 28 September 2018 a magnitude 7.5 earthquake occurred near Sulawesi, Indonesia. The earthquake initiated a localised tsunami impacting Palu, however Australia was not directly impacted. The Indonesian death toll was recorded at 4340, with over 70, 800 persons evacuated.

### **October 2018**

### ***Severe Thunderstorms for Central and Southeast Queensland - 11-12 October 2018***

- An extensive trough moving across central Queensland generated two tornados, observed at Coolabunia, southeast of Kingaroy, and Tansey, near Murgon. The Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) was activated. An Emergency Alert (EA) was issued for the areas of Hervey Bay, Maryborough, and Tiaro due to the potential for further tornados. Giant hail was observed in the Wide Bay and Burnett District and strong wind gusts were recorded near Blackwater.
- One public school was closed due to damage received from the storms, and thousands of homes and businesses suffered lengthy power outages following damage to power infrastructure. On 12 October, further widespread thunderstorms impacted most of eastern Queensland. Large hail was observed in the Townsville area. The North Coast Region in particular, suffered significant impacts to residential areas with thousands of homes and businesses without power for some time.

### ***Burst Water Main, Karragarra Island - 23 October 2018***

- On 23 October 2018 a burst water main impacted the Moreton Bay Islands of Karragarra, Macleay, and Lamb. A boil water notice was issued by Redland City Council and SEQ Water. An EA campaign was distributed to the impacted islands while repair work was underway. Volunteers from the RFS and SES assisted with distribution of water to residents. The boil water notice was lifted on 24 October 2018.

### ***November 2018***

#### ***Severe Thunderstorms for Southeast Queensland - 17 November 2018***

- Severe thunderstorms with damaging winds, heavy rainfall and large hailstones impacted areas across the southeast on 17 November 2018, causing widespread power outages and damage. A school on the Gold Coast had classrooms impacted by flash flooding.

#### ***Deepwater Bushfires & Severe Weather Conditions - November 2018***

- A prolonged heatwave in late November to early December 2018 saw recorded temperatures over much of Queensland reach 40+°C. Between 26 and 28 November 2018, 14 Queensland locations broke November daily maximum temperature records, and seven locations recorded their highest ever November mean maximum temperatures. Many other locations observed record runs of consecutive hot days during this period of intense heat.
- Below average rainfall experienced across eastern Queensland, preceded high temperatures, low humidity, and strong westerly winds to elevate the fire danger across much of Queensland. The forest fire danger index (FFDI) was extreme (over 75) across large parts of the State and reached "catastrophic" levels (100 or above) at some locations; with Rockhampton Airport reaching a peak FFDI over 130. By 28 November, QFES were responding to about 130 bushfires. Over 716,000 hectares burnt between 26 and 30 November. On the 30 November there remained 105 fires burning, and by 6 December over one million hectares had been burnt. Fires occurred across the length of the east coast, from just south of Cairns to the Gold Coast.
- Up to 800 residents of Deepwater were urged to evacuate on 26 November, and on the 28th around 4000 residents of Gracemere were evacuated. Nine dwellings were identified as destroyed and an additional eight damaged, along with dozens of sheds and other structures. Various degrees of damage to crops, horticulture, and livestock were also recorded.

**December 2018****Severe Tropical Cyclone Owen - December 2018**

- A tropical low was detected in the Solomon Sea on 30 November 2018. The system moved into the Coral Sea and formed into a tropical cyclone (TC) on 2 December. The system was named TC Owen and continued to move into the southeast of the Coral Sea before weakening into a tropical low. The system then headed toward Queensland, making landfall near Port Douglas on 10 December. Heavy rain accompanied the tropical low.
- Ex TC Owen crossed Cape York Peninsula and re-intensified in the gulf reaching category 3 intensity. The now Severe Tropical Cyclone (STC) crossed back toward Queensland and made landfall near the Gilbert River on the southwest corner of Cape York Peninsula early on 15 December before tracking back toward the east coast.
- Record breaking rainfall accompanied the system, with Halifax (west of Ingham) receiving 681 mm of rain in 24 hours, breaking the national record for December. The Bruce Highway was cut north of Ingham. Two flood water rescues occurred, including a mother and daughter rescued from their vehicle in crocodile-infested floodwaters. After moving back into the Coral Sea, the remains of STC Owen persisted as a tropical low for several days but did not re-form into a tropical cyclone.

**January 2019****Tropical Cyclone Penny - December 2018/January 2019**

- On 28 December, a tropical low formed in the northwest Coral Sea. The system crossed Cape York Peninsula as a low-pressure system, intensifying to a TC once it reached the Gulf of Carpentaria on 1 January and was named TC Penny. TC Penny made landfall along the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, near Weipa, on New Year's Day 2019, as a category 1 system.
- On 2 January, the system reached the Coral Sea and reformed into a TC maintaining an easterly course. The system intensified to a category 2 TC on 4 January, and by the end of 5 January, had weakened into a tropical low. The remnants of Penny tracked back towards the Queensland east coast over the next few days and again made landfall near Bowen on 9 January, bringing heavy rainfall.

**M3.9 Earthquake Off coastal Airlie - 19 January 2019**

- A magnitude 3.9 earthquake occurred off the coast of Airlie on 19 January. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 10km and around 60km east northeast of Bowen and posed no Tsunami threat for the Australian mainland, islands, and territories.

**Active Monsoon for Far Northern Region: Townsville and Northwest Queensland Floods – January/February 2019**

- On 23 January, a monsoon low was identified east of Mapoon. The system moved into the Gulf of Carpentaria and deepened, however then moved back over land on 26 January before it could form into a tropical cyclone.
- Late on 26 January, thunderstorms and torrential rainfall occurred about the Mossman and Daintree areas. The tropical low moved slowly southwest near Cardwell, where it stalled and remained almost stationary. Torrential rain occurred for around 7 days over northwest Queensland, most notably around the Townsville area.

- The heaviest rainfalls impacted areas around Cloncurry, Julia Creek, and Richmond. Record flooding occurred over a wide area, with major floods in the Flinders, Cloncurry, Albert, and Leichhardt Rivers. The Flinders River at Richmond broke the long-standing 1974 flood level. Over 300,000 cattle perished in floodwaters at a cost of over \$300 million.
- On the east coast, the Townsville, Bluewater, and Paluma areas received the heaviest falls. Townsville received more than their annual rainfall in a week. Major flooding occurred in the Ross, Haughton, Herbert, Burdekin, Ross, Bohle, Black, and Murray rivers. On 3 February, further torrential thunderstorms developed over the Ross River catchment and dropped 300mm of rain in a few hours. The Ross River Dam reached nearly 250% capacity and its floodgates opened automatically to avert dam failure, exacerbating the pre-existing flooding of the Ross River in Townsville. Over 2000 properties in Townsville were flooded, and 3 deaths occurred because of floodwaters.

### ***February 2019***

#### ***Severe Tropical Cyclone Oma - February 2019***

- On 11 February, a tropical low formed in the Coral Sea west of Vanuatu. The system formed into a cyclone and was named TC Oma on 12 February. By 18 February the slow-moving system had intensified to a category 3. STC Oma started to move into the southern Coral Sea on 22 February it began to lose some of its tropical characteristics and by 23 February the system was transitioning into a subtropical cyclone, around 400km northeast of Lord Howe Island.
- TC Oma remained well offshore and while losing its intensity, still created damaging and destructive winds off the southeast Queensland coast, creating maximum wave heights at Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast and Point Lookout (North Stradbroke Island).

#### ***Wallangarra/Eukey Bushfire - February 2019***

- Several large bushfires were burning in northern NSW between 12-22 February. The Wallangarra/Eukey bushfire on the NSW border around Girraween National Park required a multiagency response with interstate and ADF support. A large contingent of QFES fire crews with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service fire crews supported by local government, combined to control the fire in the area near Girraween National Park. The fire was of major concern for more than 11 days eventually burning more than 45,000 hectares.
- Australian Army Engineering crews from Enoggera in Brisbane deployed to provide specific protection to both military and civil assets in the cross-border area. A warning message using the EA system was issued to people in the affected areas.

#### ***M3.4 Earthquake Southwest of Roma - 25 February 2019***

- A magnitude 3.4 earthquake occurred 180km southwest of Roma on 25 February. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 5km. There were no reports of injuries or structural damage. There was no threat of Tsunami for the Australian mainland, islands, and territories.

### ***March 2019***

#### ***Woodgate Bushfire - 9-13 March 2019***

- A large bushfire started burning around Goodwood (south of Bundaberg). Fire conditions allowed the fire to spread easily, and it took several days for firefighters to get the fire contained, aided by QFES personnel on the ground, water bombing from the air, and rain. An EA was issued to notify residents in the Woodgate and Goodwood areas of the fire.

***Severe Tropical Cyclone Trevor - March 2019***

- On 11 March a tropical low formed in the Solomon Sea east of Papua New Guinea before moving into the northern Coral Sea on 16 March. At 0400hrs 17 March TC Trevor formed. TC Trevor rapidly intensified and crossed the Queensland coast just south of Lockhart River on 19 March as a severe category 3 system.
- The cyclone slowed down during crossing and the community of Lockhart River was subject to destructive winds for four hours with peak gusts recorded up to 137 km/h (74 knots). The cyclone weakened to category 1 intensity as it traversed Cape York Peninsula, emerging into the Gulf of Carpentaria south of Weipa on 21st March.
- TC Trevor re-intensified over the gulf to a STC category 4 system and crossed into the Northern Territory with recorded wind gusts over land of 139km/h. The system moved inland, weakening to a tropical low on 24 March and moved into Queensland on 26 March near Mount Isa. The system then continued moving across north central Queensland districts for several days, significantly impacting north Queensland. Some parts of central-west and south-west Queensland received their first substantial rain in more than a year.

***Severe Thunderstorms for Central Queensland - 12 March 2019***

- Severe thunderstorms impacted central Queensland on 12 March 2019. BoM issued severe thunderstorm warnings with SEWS for damaging winds and heavy rainfall near Gladstone and Rockhampton. Strong wind gusts were detected at Cloncurry.

***Severe Thunderstorms for Central and Southeast Queensland – 15-18 March 2019***

- On 15 March 2019 very dangerous thunderstorms with locally destructive winds and intense rainfall impacted southeast and central Queensland. Further severe thunderstorms materialised on 17 and 18 March in central and southeast Queensland.

***April 2019******Space Debris Re-Entry - 15 April 2019***

- The SDCC was advised that a Falcon 9 two-stage rocket was expected to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere some time on 15 April. The predicted location of the re-entry was from the central Pacific Ocean region across central Queensland, Northern Territory, and northwest Western Australia, out to the northeast Indian Ocean. Expected paths across Queensland were mostly minimally populated. A number of trajectory recalculations occurred before this event finished. There was no impact to any part of the Australian mainland.

***May 2019******Palm Island Water Supply - May 2019***

- Due to issues with water supply infrastructure on Palm Island from 2-11 May 2019, residents were advised not to drink, cook with, or consume any tap water. Five EA warnings were issued to residents, advising them to consume bottled water only.

**Activations**

There were twelve activations of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019. The DRFA is a jointly funded program between the Australian Government and

state and territory governments, through which the Australian Government provides financial assistance to support state governments with disaster recovery costs.

### Declarations

There were five Disaster Situations declared pursuant to section 64 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* during the reporting period. Disaster declarations were made for Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Far North and Mt Isa Disaster Districts.

## Disaster Management Activities

The following is a sample of activities undertaken to maintain or enhance Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements during 2018-19:

- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) provided a range of information, planning and preparation services including community education and a Bushfire Safety advertising campaign through engagement activities such as local door knocking, attendance at townhall meetings and use of television, radio and social media.
- Hazard reduction burns and other mitigation activities were undertaken by QFES, private landholders, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, HQ Plantations and the Department of Defence.
- QFES trialed the use of Remote Piloted Aerial Systems (drones) to assist in a range of observation and assessment activities.
- New predictive services were implemented to support bushfire mitigation including grass fuel mapping data that underpins fire behaviour models, and an online snap report which provides rapid and essential information for crews to plan hazard reduction burns.
- In June 2019, the *Queensland State Heatwave Risk Assessment 2019* was delivered in partnership between QFES, the Department of Environment and Science (DES) and the National Climate Change Adaptation Facility. The assess report provides a comprehensive analysis of future climate risk and the inclusion of detailed climate change projections for communities.
- Testing and exercising of the Emergency Alert system has been undertaken to ensure it is ready for use to alert the community, via SMS (text message) or recorded landline messages, to emergency situations, and what action to take.
- In response to recommendations arising from the Inspector-General Emergency Management Cyclone Debbie Review, the Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games published two flyers providing information for tourists and tourism operators on what to do in a disaster event.
- Implemented flood mitigation strategies including the Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy; the Bundaberg Action Plan; the development of Limestone Park Detention Basin; and the Charlton North Detention Basin.
- Delivered the Household Resilience Program which provides funding to eligible homeowners to improve the resilience of their homes against cyclones.
- Released the revised State Disaster Management Plan.
- All 22 disaster districts undertook training and exercises in preparation for disaster events.

- The Queensland AUS-1 Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) participated in the 2018 International Search and Rescue Advisory Group Recertification exercise in August 2018, undertaken by international classifiers from countries including China, Japan, Netherlands and Saudi Arabia.
- Exercise Torres tested Queensland's readiness to respond to an oil pollution incident in the Torres Strait and explored the consequences of a ship-sourced pollution incident.
- The State Disaster Coordination Centre participated in Exercise PacWave18, an international tsunami exercise coordinated by the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre.
- The Department of Education conducted a severe weather regional exercise in the North Coast Region using a scenario which included flooding, storm damage and possible evacuation of students.

## Disaster Management Priorities

Disaster Management Priorities for 2019-20 are as follows:

- Improving community awareness of disaster preparedness through the Get Ready Queensland program and the Queensland Disaster Resilience Fund.
- Overseeing community recovery for the 2018-19 disaster events with an estimated damage of \$1.3 billion, including the North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough and the Central Queensland Bushfires.
- Implementation of recovery plans to assist disaster impacted communities.
- Managing delivery of key projects including reconstruction of the Whitsunday Regional Council administration centre, the Proserpine Entertainment Centre, Mackay Regional Council's Bluewater Trail and Queen's Park redevelopment.



## Abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DES	Department of Environment and Science
<i>DM Act</i>	<i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i>
DRFA	Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements
EA	Emergency Alert
FFDI	Forest Fire Danger Index
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PPRR	Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery
QDMC	Queensland Disaster Management Committee
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
QTCCC	Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee
RFS	Rural Fire Service
SDCC	State Disaster Coordination Centre
SDCG	State Disaster Coordination Group
SDMP	State Disaster Management Plan
SEQ	South East Queensland
SEWS	Standard Emergency Warning Signal
SHECC	State Health Emergency Coordination Centre
STC	Severe Tropical Cyclone
TC	Tropical Cyclone