

Annual Report 2020-21

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) and the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC).

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 Health and Ambulance Services
- Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement
- Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts
- Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing
- Treasurer and Minister for Investment
- Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
- Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services
- Minister for Transport and Main Roads
- Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water

Attending Officials:

- Director-General, Department of Energy and Public Works
- Director-General, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
- Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Director-General, Department of Education
- Under Treasurer, Queensland Treasury

- Director-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
- Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Reconstruction Authority
- Director-General, Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Director-General, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water
- 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

2020-21 Meetings

Ordinary meetings

- Nil

Extraordinary meetings

- Two (2) meetings – 18 and 19 January 2021.

The Year in Review

July 2020

COVID-19

- The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Queensland was on 29 January 2020. On 2 February 2020, the SDCC moved its activation level to 'Stand Up' in response to the COVID-19 threat and to provide support to the Queensland State Health Emergency Coordination Centre (SHECC). The World Health Organisation declared a Global Pandemic on 12 March 2020. A Disaster Declaration for Queensland was approved on 22 March 2020.
- The SDCC has remained at Stand Up for the entire reporting period of this report. The high-level response of the SDCC has not wavered, and the part played by staff has been significant, professional, and timely.
- The SDCC Planning Cell has assisted in the development of a state-wide vaccination plan and continues to support the Queensland Government's response to the pandemic.
- The SDCC Operations cell provides the primary link for COVID-19 operational enquiries between government agencies at Local, State and National levels and the SHECC. Staffed by Queensland Police Service Officers, the Operations cells acts under the command of the State Disaster Coordinator.
- The SDCC Logistics cell has provided high level support to the Queensland COVID-19 response. To provide a whole of government response the SDCC moved to Stand Up. SDCC Logistics was tasked to provide logistical support to the SHECC with the managed detainment of persons entering Australia from overseas into quarantine accommodation.

October – December 2020

Bushfires, K'gari (Fraser Island) - October – December 2020

- An illegal campfire in October 2020 resulted in a large bushfire on K'gari (Fraser Island). The bushfire burned over 87,000 hectares of land before it was eventually extinguished after heavy rainfall and thunderstorms developed over the island on 13 December.
- Significant QFES resources were utilised in combating the fire including Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service, and State Emergency Service personnel, a large aerial tanker (LAT), and Watch Desk personnel who issued Emergency Alerts for the fire.

Severe Thunderstorms, Southeast Queensland – 31 October 2020

- Unstable weather patterns leading up to 31 October 2020 contributed to severe thunderstorms developing in central and southeast Queensland. Just after midday on 31 October, several storm cells south of Ipswich produced giant hail measuring up to 14cm in an area from Amberley toward Logan, 7cm hail in the Gympie area, and wind gusts over 100km/h around Moreton Bay.
- Significant damage to houses and buildings in affected areas resulted in over 1,900 requests for assistance from the SES in storm affected regions on 31 October alone, with additional requests from residents in the following days. Estimates place the damage bill to property at over \$1 Billion.

December 2020

Severe Weather for Southeast Queensland - 12-18 December 2020

- Southeast Queensland experienced severe weather conditions in December 2020. A surface and upper-level trough led to heavy periods of intense and heavy rainfall. Over 1,000mm of rain was recorded in Upper Springfield between 13 – 17 December, while other areas in the Gold Coast recorded 300-400mm in the same period. The weather systems contributed to large seas, where an 11-metre wave was recorded off North Stradbroke Island and a 50cm storm surge contributed to flooding of low-lying areas south of Fraser Island. The Logan River exceeded minor flood levels, and flash flooding around Killarney resulted in a fatality on the evening of 16 December.

January 2021

Tropical Cyclone Imogen – 1-4 January 2021

- On 1 January 2021 a low-pressure system developed in the western Gulf of Carpentaria. This tropical low then moved southeast toward Mornington Island and after crossing over the island, developed into a Category 1 Tropical Cyclone on 3 January. Tropical cyclone Imogen moved rapidly to the Queensland Coast and crossed near Karumba late on 3 January as a Category 1 Tropical Cyclone. Tropical Cyclone Imogen caused some minor damage to infrastructure and vegetation before it de-intensified. The system delivered heavy rain in parts of Far North Queensland, abnormal high tides, and sustained gales.

Tropical Cyclone Kimi – 16-19 January 2021

- On 15 January, a tropical low formed off the northeast coast of Cape York Peninsula. The system tracked downwards parallel to the coast and developed. The system was named Tropical Cyclone (TC) Kimi on 17 January. TC Kimi continued moving southwards, almost paralleling the Queensland North Tropical Coast and observations indicate it may have reached category 2 intensity for a short duration. Late on 18 January, the cyclone weakened rapidly when it encountered unfavourable conditions

February – March 2021

Severe Tropical Cyclone Niran – 27 February-5 March 2021

- Severe Tropical Cyclone Niran began developing off the north Queensland coast on 27 February 2021. The low-pressure system moved slowly toward Cairns before changing to a north travelling system. On 2 March, the system reached cyclone strength and was named Tropical Cyclone Niran. The system continued to move slowly and began to intensify reaching Category 3 by 4 March.
- Severe Tropical Cyclone Niran began to accelerate and move in a southeast direction before reaching Category 5 intensity on 6 March. Severe Tropical Cyclone Niran did not cross the Queensland coast however high winds caused some damage to crop in coastal areas.

Severe Weather for Southeast Queensland – March 2021

- A significant rain event impacted parts of New South Wales in late March 2021, and this event saw impacts in southern areas of Queensland. A slow-moving low-pressure system off the NSW coast contributed to intense rainfall in coastal areas of Southeast Queensland. A second low pressure system generated around central Australia which brought moist air from NSW leading to heavy rainfall over central southern Queensland. Significant rainfall recorded at various locations in Queensland led to major floods in the Bulloo, Herbert, Lockyer, Bremer, Warril, Lower Brisbane, Logan and Albert, Macintyre, Paroo, Condamine and Paroo Rivers.

Activations

There were eleven activations of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021. 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 was one Disaster Declaration made pursuant to section 69 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* during the reporting period. Disaster declaration was made on 22 March 2020 and remained in force/extended until it expired on 24 June 2022.

Disaster Management Activities

The following is a sample of activities undertaken to maintain or enhance Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements during 2020-21:

- Operation Cool Burn, the annual operation bushfire mitigation program commenced on 1 April 2020 and would traditionally conclude on 31 August 2021, however this year marks the transition to a year-around mitigation program. The new program is supported by fourteen new fire behaviour analysts who will gain supervised experience throughout the bushfire season to enhance and extend current coverage across Queensland, as well as an additional 20 positions, including eight First Nations positions, within the Rural Fire Service focused on bushfire mitigation.
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS) fire management on parks and forest lands included 330 prescribed burns over 600,000 hectares and bushfire risk reduction treatments over 1,700 hectares of protection zones on park and forest boundaries.
- The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has an active bushfire prevention fuel hazard management program for the state-controlled road reserve that focuses on areas of high and extreme bushfire risk.

- The Inspector-General Emergency Management continued to monitor, evaluate and report on progress towards implementing recommendations from *the 2018 Queensland Bushfires Review Report 2: 2018-2019*.
- Air quality scientists have been working with QFES and Queensland Health to identify key monitoring locations for the upcoming fire season. This will provide local communities with reliable air quality data during smoke events, 'health action' advice and near-real time air quality monitoring with hourly alerts.
- The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries continues to investigate innovative approaches to enable more accurate disaster impact assessment to ensure appropriate levels of assistance are available to support recovery of impacted primary producers.
- The Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA), through the Get Ready Queensland program, has launched a bushfire insurance awareness advertising campaign reminding Queenslanders to check they have adequate insurance cover ahead of the bushfire season. QFES' Bushfire Preparation campaign will highlight the widespread risk of bushfire and urge residents to prepare themselves and their properties.
- Following the catastrophic fires of the last two seasons, the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy's (DCHDE) annual preparedness program included an additional focus on fire safety, preparation and communication. DCHDE has additionally reviewed the Temporary Emergency Accommodation Plan which provides the framework for supporting people displaced from their homes due to natural disasters and incorporates learnings from recent activations.
- The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy developed the Queensland Power System Summer Preparedness Report 2020-21 to confirm that all reasonable steps were taken to prepare the Queensland power for the 2020-21 summer.
- Established a COVID-19 and Natural Disaster Preparedness Working Group to consider potential impacts of concurrent natural disaster while managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Areas considered included air operations; interstate, international and intrastate deployments; fatigue management; management of facilities such as evacuation centres or recovery hubs; and staff capacity and concept of operations for the State Disaster Coordination Centre.
- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) received pre-season briefings to enable their planning. The ADF plays a crucial role in disaster response, including providing logistics, heavy equipment, and aerial support.
- Released refreshed campaigns for 'If it's flooded, forget it' and 'Back it up', urging drivers to make alternative arrangements and avoid driving when flooding is a concern.

Disaster Management Priorities for 2021-22 are as follows:

- QFES, with the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC), will establish a contracted LAT service for a four-year period commencing on 1 September 2021. The service will be contracted for 84 days each season, with the possibility of an extension dependent on seasonal conditions and fire activity. The service will be based in Bundaberg during Queensland's bushfire season.
- Continue to oversee recovery for disaster events in active delivery during the year.
- Influence and enhance the development of national relief, recovery and resilience policy through partnerships with government and industry stakeholders.

Abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
COVID-19	SARS-CoV-2 virus
DCHDE	Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
<i>DM Act</i>	<i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i>
DRFA	Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements
LAT	Large Aerial Tanker
NAFC	National Aerial Firefighting Centre
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PPRR	Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery
QDMC	Queensland Disaster Management Committee
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
QRA	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
SDCC	State Disaster Coordination Centre
SDCG	State Disaster Coordination Group
SDMP	State Disaster Management Plan
SES	State Emergency Service
SHECC	State Health Emergency Coordination Centre
TC	Tropical Cyclone
TMR	Transport and Main Roads