

During



Disaster Operations

Overview
of
Activities

July
to
December
2010





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services activated the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements three times for different natural disaster events that impacted Queensland during this period.

Due to extensive flooding in central and south-west Queensland, the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services declared a Disaster Situation under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* on six occasions.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) was activated on two occasions outside normal business hours to support operations relating to South East Queensland Storms, October 2010 and Central Queensland Floods December 2010 & South East Queensland Floods January 2011, incorporating Tropical Cyclone Tasha.

The SDCC Watch Desk also assisted in numerous minor operations that occurred state-wide but did not warrant formal out of hours activation of the SDCC.

There were no visits to Queensland by nuclear powered warships.





STATE DISASTER COORDINATION CENTRE

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

South West Queensland Low, 3-6 September 2010

Heavy rainfall in the south west of the state, particularly in the Birdsville area in early September, resulted in the closure of major access roads.

Flood water damaged roads, but property was not significantly inundated. Approximately 5,000 persons were temporarily stranded at Birdsville for several days due to the road closures, and the annual Birdsville Races were cancelled.

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements funding was activated.



The State Disaster Coordination Centre was not activated but was monitoring the situation during this period.

Victoria Flood Assistance, Sept 2010

Heavy rainfall in Victoria during early September resulted in major flooding across the state. On 5 September, 2010, the Attorney General's Department Coordination Centre advised that the Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) had been activated.

As a result, Victoria State Emergency Service contacted the State Disaster Coordination Centre to request Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) incident management trained staff to assist with the Victorian flooding event.

A total of ten EMQ personnel from across the state were required to render counter disaster operational support during the Victorian flood event from Sunday, 5 September. All EMQ personnel were returned to Queensland from Victoria by Sunday, 12 September 2010.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was not activated but was monitoring the situation during this period.

South East Queensland Storms, October 2010

The period 1 to 14 October saw heavy rainfall recorded in the South East, Brisbane, North Coast, and South West Regions of Queensland. The very heavy rainfall recorded between 8 and 12 October saw river level rises and minor to moderate flooding in the Sunshine Coast creeks and streams, Pine and Caboolture Rivers and in the Brisbane River catchments.

Minor to moderate flooding was recorded in several rivers and creeks across the North Coast region with rainfall totals between 150–350 mm recorded in the 96 hours to 9:00am 12 October.





A major flood peak was recorded in the upper Mary River on 12 October. Flash flooding was recorded in several northern Brisbane suburbs resulting in traffic disruptions with inundation of residential areas recorded in some suburbs.

SES Groups across the South East and North Coast Regions were activated for a variety of storm damage related tasks including roof damage and storm damage operations. Many roads were closed across the regions due to flooding.

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements funding was made available for the affected areas. The State Disaster Coordination Centre was activated from 8 to 14 October 2010.

Central Queensland Floods December 2010 and Tropical Cyclone Tasha.

Late November and December 2010 saw record high levels of rainfall resulting in widespread flooding on many rivers. Severe flooding was experienced in Queensland in terms of extent and impact and was the most significant in Australia since the 1970s. This was the wettest December on record for Queensland, and the second-wettest for the Murray-Darling Basin. This followed an extremely wet spring, the wettest on record for Queensland and the Murray-Darling Basin. Many catchments were already wet before the flooding rain impacted.

Heavy rain impacted Queensland from the week of 28 November right through December. Further rain was brought into the region by the circulation associated with Tropical Cyclone Tasha, which made landfall south of Cairns on the morning of 25 December. The rains from 23 to 28 December resulted in exceptional flooding in many parts of central and southern Queensland with many rivers reaching record levels. By 23 December, many rivers were already at or near flood level as a result of the rains in the preceding weeks (with some, notably the Dawson, experiencing major flooding). The rains during the following few days, on top of the pre-existing wet conditions, resulted in major flooding over a vast region. Except for the southeast coastal fringe south of Maryborough, almost every river in Queensland that is south of the Tropic of Capricorn and east of Charleville and Longreach reached major flood level at some stage during the period from 26 November to 7 January, mostly between 23 December and 4 January. Properties were inundated in at least 17 towns in Queensland, with the largest impacts in the towns of Theodore, Dalby, Chinchilla, Emerald, Bundaberg and Rockhampton.

Under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act 2003, Disaster Situations were declared for the Bundaberg, Dalby, Gladstone, Longreach, Rockhampton and Roma Police Districts.

Emergency Alert SMS and voice message advice/warnings were sent to flooded communities 18 times during December.



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 July to December 2010, 1,733 weather advices were received from the Bureau. 250 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 1,483 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

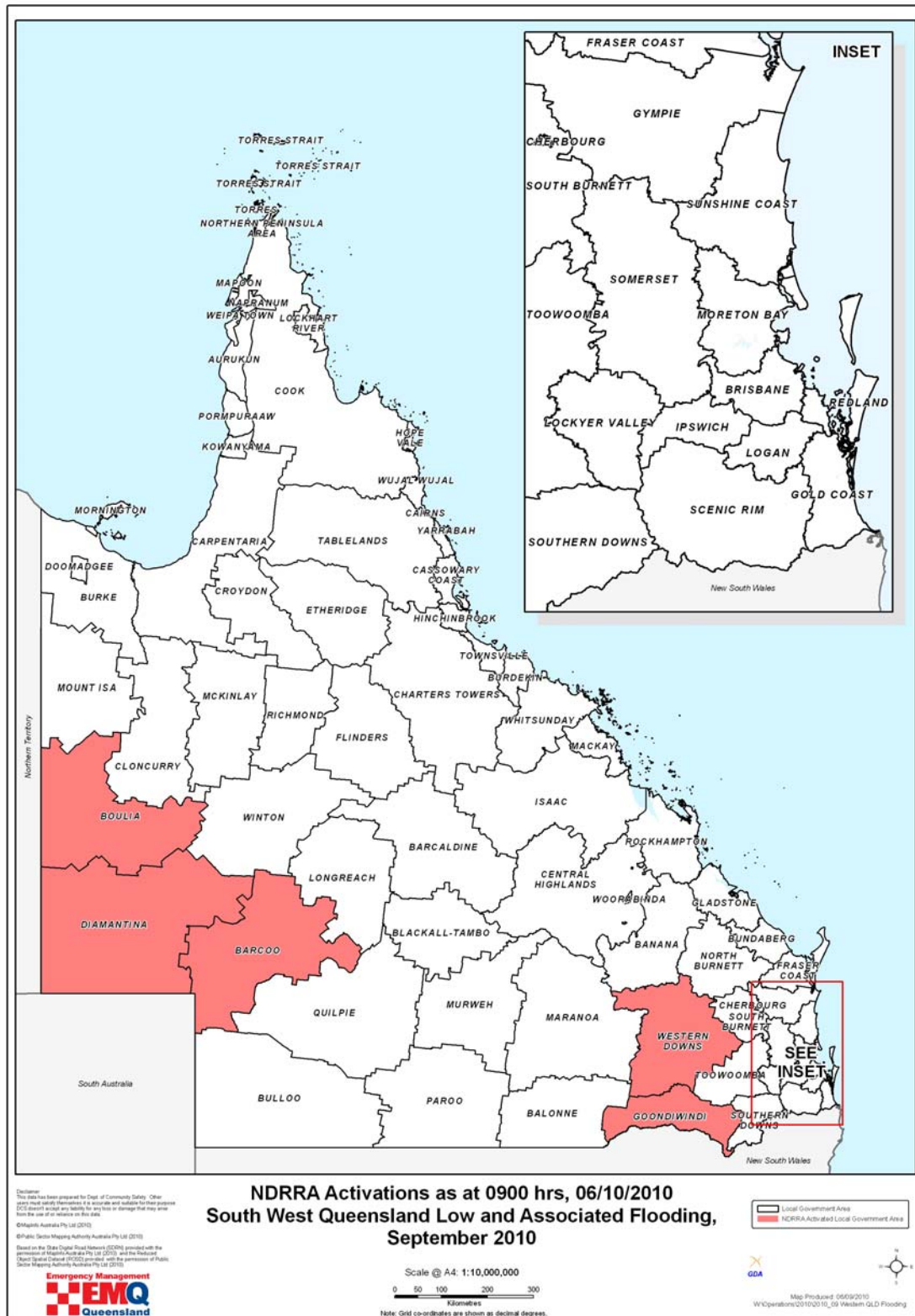
No resupply operations were undertaken by the SDCC during this period, as Queensland has not experienced sufficient rainfall this 'wet season' to isolate communities for an extended time. However, it is highly likely that resupply operations of essential foods will probably occur over the next months, as the monsoon trough is expected to become more active due to the La Nina conditions.



DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

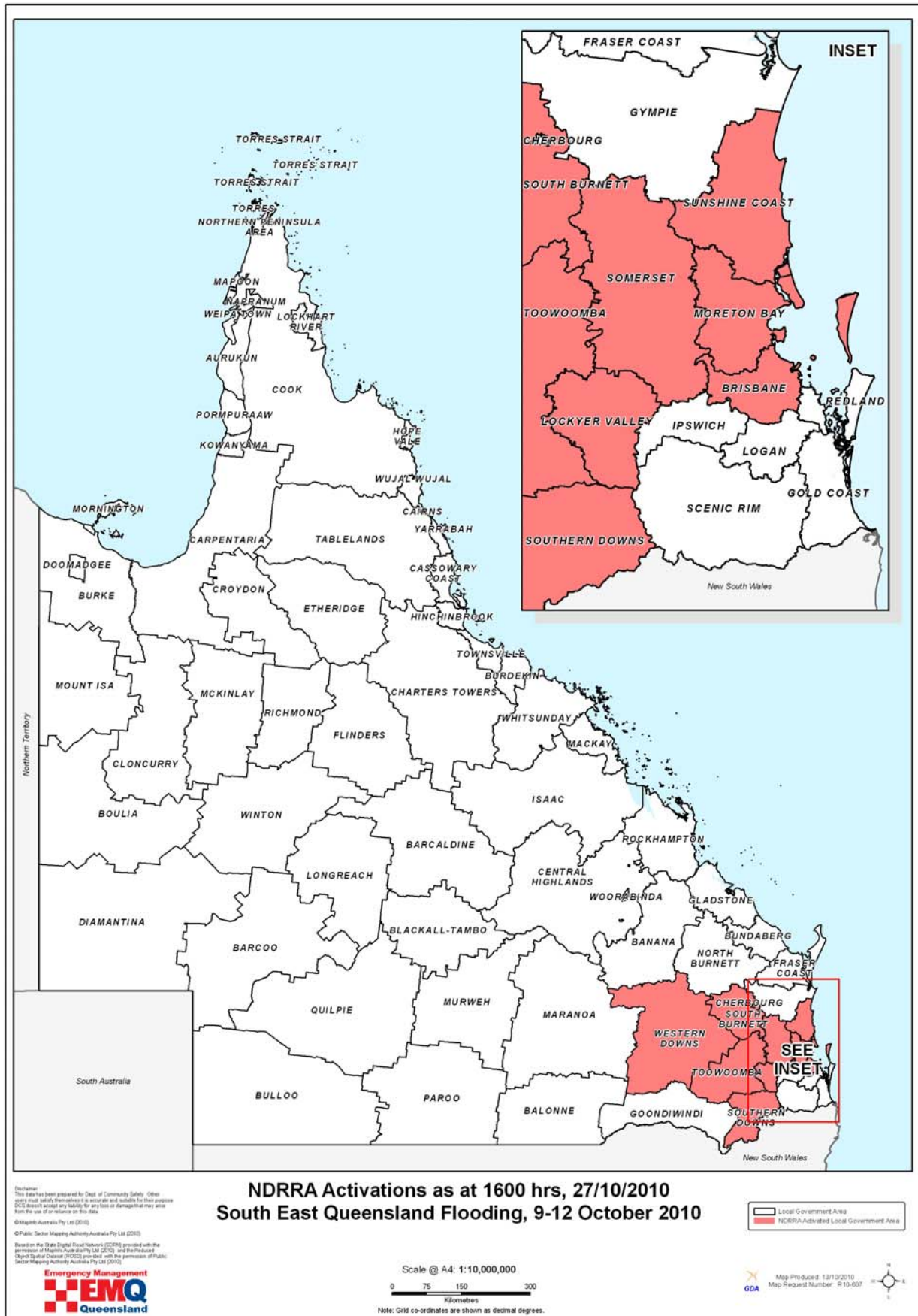
The Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services activated the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements on three occasions during this period, however, a number of Local Government areas were impacted by multiple events. There was no activation of the State (funded) Disaster Relief Arrangements.

Southwest Queensland Flooding



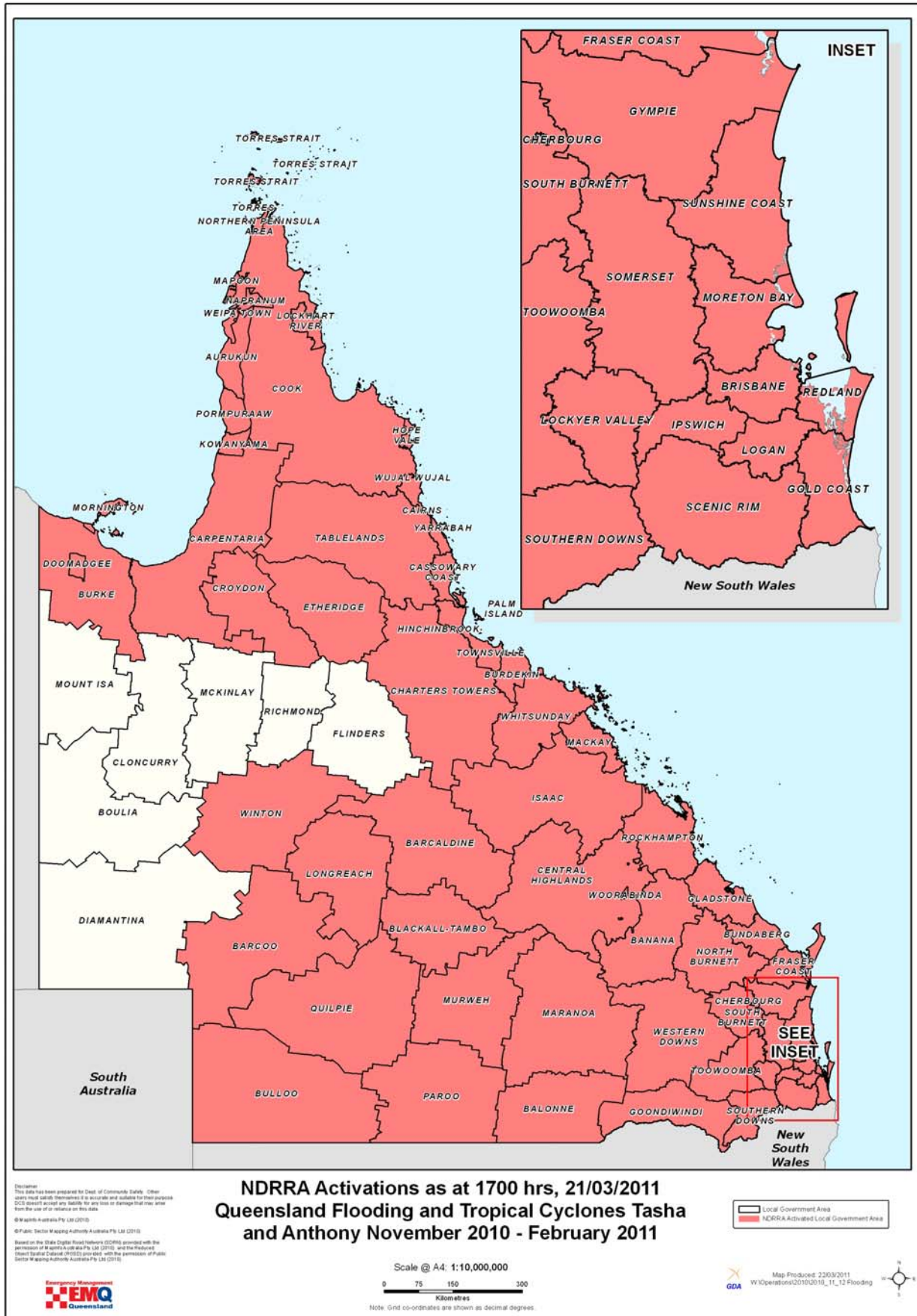


Southeast Queensland Flooding





Queensland Flooding and Tropical Cyclone Tasha





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.

Disaster Operations staff are encouraged to attend internal and external training activities and courses as part of their professional development and succession planning.

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. Internal training sessions conducted during this period included SDCC functional cell training, overviews of Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements, Watch Desk Officer skills training as well as organisation and participation in various exercises.

Exercise Mercury

This year Queensland's role is at the strategic level in the Multi Jurisdictional Counter Terrorism Exercise (MJEX) that was conducted in August 2010 across the country. conducted throughout Australia later this year. The aim of the Mercury series of exercises is to practise the national counter terrorism arrangements and improve Queensland's capability to manage terrorist threats and engage with all levels of government in a national terrorist situation.

Exercise Open Heaven

On 20 October, 2010, the SDCC conducted a field exercise designed to exercise the skills and knowledge previously gained by SDCC volunteer staff and improve the operational readiness of the SDCC. The objectives of this exercise included:

- Exercise participant's skills in operating SDCC information management systems;
- Exercise participant's knowledge of information flow in the SDCC;
- Exercise SDCC standard operating procedures; and
- Exercise the equipment within the SDCC.

A total of nineteen officers from the Department of Community Safety were involved in Exercise Open Heaven.



Exercise Orko

Exercise Orko was the second of seven planned disaster management exercises, which ran in Emergency Management Queensland's (EMQ) South West Region as part of the 2009-2010 Ministerial Portfolio priority to "develop and deliver an Enhanced Exercise Regime for District Disaster Management Groups (DDMG) and Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG)". Funding was provided under the Election Commitment 2009 'Supporting our Heroes' commitment to June 2014.

The exercise was designed around a hypothetical but realistic extreme weather event affecting the Dalby, Toowoomba and Warwick Disaster Districts and the Goondiwindi, Lockyer Valley, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and Western Downs Local Governments.

The objectives for Exercise Orko were to:

- Trigger the activation of disaster management arrangements in response to major flooding / storm event;
- Exercise whole-of-government disaster management relationships at local, district and state level;
- Exercise LDMG evacuation plans;
- Exercise emergency call centre capacity to deal with high volume calls;
- Enable members of disaster management groups to actively engage in the business of the group.
- Exercise re-supply arrangements for the region;
- Exercise the establishment of a recovery transition strategy.
- Evaluate the communication flow between disaster management groups.

Exercise Red Feather

Exercise Red Feather was a series of three discussion exercises aimed at evaluating the ability of Biosecurity Queensland and industry to respond to and manage a large biosecurity incident or emergency. The exercise was based on the finding of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1, on a commercial poultry premises within Queensland.

The three discussion exercises focused on the following areas:

- 1) High-level disease response strategy direction and policy making (2 days). This examined acquiring human and physical resources required in an emergency and appropriately allocating and prioritising the use of such resources, as well as establishing management arrangements that transfer a high-level policy and strategy from central management centres to emergency operations centres.
- 2) Movement controls/restrictions and stock standstill (1 day).
- 3) Strategy and policy making regarding management of zoonotic disease, including personal protective equipment and workplace health and safety (1 day).

Exercise Waterwitch - Cairns

The Department of Transport and Main Roads hosted a discussion exercise conducted on 24 November 2010, examined the issues and challenges associated with a multi-agency response to a marine chemical incident in a remote part of Far North Queensland. The exercise involved representatives from Federal, State and Local Governments as well as a local shipping company.



STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENTS

Disaster Management Review

The Department of Community Safety commissioned an independent review of the appropriateness of the Disaster Management Act 2003, policies, guidelines and plans, as well as management and accountability issues relating to the State Emergency Service.

The Review concluded that Queensland's disaster management system is soundly based and affirmed that local government should remain the cornerstone of our disaster management system, supported by district and state level disaster management groups.

The *Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010* implements those recommendations of the Review that required legislative amendment.

The Bill establishes guiding principles for effective disaster management. It includes the requirement for disaster management planning to occur across all four phases of disaster management: prevention; preparation; response; and recovery. It also includes the principle that all events, whether natural or human caused, should be managed using the State's disaster management framework, including the State Disaster Management Plan and any disaster management guidelines prepared by the chief executive, DCS, under the Act.

The Bill contains a number of amendments to the roles in disaster management groups. These amendments implement the key recommendation from the review report that Queensland Police Service take on an increased operational role with Emergency Management Queensland to focus on ensuring there is an effective disaster management framework in place.

A copy of the Review can be found at:

http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/publications/pdf/Consultants_DM_Report_FINAL.pdf

Queensland Emergency Operations Centre (QEOC)

The QEOC will ensure the Department can more effectively coordinate day-to-day emergency responses and improve the management of large scale incidents and disasters. Planning for the relocation of the SDCC to the Disaster Management Centre in the QEOC has continued throughout this period and training sessions are being planned in order to validate operational competencies for all staff in the QEOC. It is anticipated that the SDCC will relocate to the QEOC in early 2011.



Workshop Contribution

Disaster Operations staff actively participated in the following workshops:

- Department of Transport and Main Roads Oversight Board
- Emergency Services and Critical Infrastructure Forum
- Evacuation Framework for Queensland Coastal Communities
- Long Term Recovery
- Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements - Darwin
- Review of Tropical Cyclone Storm Tide Warning Response System
- Storm Season Planning
- Tsunami

Committee Contribution

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

- Communication and Information Committee
- Community Resilience Steering Group
- Emergency Alert Steering Committee
- Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires
- Location Based System Steering Committee
- National Emergency Management Committee
- Public Safety Communications Steering Committee
- Queensland Counter Terrorism Strategy Working Group
- Queensland Emergency Operations Centre Project Control Group
- Queensland Flood Consultative Committee
- Queensland Flood Warning Consultative Committee
- Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee
- Red Cross Emergency Services Working Group
- Senior Executive Management Team
- State Disaster Coordination Group
- State Disaster Management Group
- Victoria Bushfires Royal Commission – Queensland Interdepartmental Committee
- Victoria Bushfires Royal Commission – Working Party
- 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.

- Queensland Police Service
- Surf Life Saving Queensland