

Community Recovery Review

FINAL REPORT

JUNE 2015

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

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This Review has been undertaken by the Department to explore opportunities for continual improvement within all operational components of Community Recovery.

Introduction

Disaster recovery is the coordinated process of supporting individuals and communities in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure, restoration of the economy and the environment, and support for the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of those affected (Queensland State Disaster Management Plan). Human and Social Recovery, more commonly known as Community Recovery—for which, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (the Department) is the lead functional agency in Queensland—refers particularly to the “emotional, social and physical wellbeing” elements of disaster recovery. This Review has been undertaken by the Department to explore opportunities for continual improvement within all operational components of Community Recovery.

Scope

The scope of the Review included, but was not limited to:

- Interoperability with partner agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs)
- Balancing immediate, medium and long term recovery objectives
- Grants and payments processes and systems
- ICT capabilities and solutions
- Response staffing deployment and support
- Readiness and scenario planning
- Communications and social media.

An Interim Report was completed by the end of April 2015 to test findings and recommendations with a wider audience of stakeholders to inform this Final Report.

Implementation

Subject to Government consideration and approval, implementation of the Review recommendations will require further planning and negotiation in consultation with stakeholders. The proposals of some recommendations represent enhancements to services that are not currently resourced, and as such may require additional funding to develop and implement. Where this is the case, subsequent funding proposals may be submitted to Government for consideration following more detailed scoping and analysis.

Review recommendations represent a range of short and long term changes to the way in which Community Recovery services are delivered.

Review recommendations also represent a range of short and long term changes to the way in which Community Recovery services are delivered. Some changes may be prioritised for action prior to the next disaster season late-2015, while others will be ongoing into 2016. Following approval of recommendations, implementation planning and action prioritisation will occur.

Principles

The Review has developed the following principles, from a shared-values perspective for all stakeholders, taking into account the Department's Customer Service Vision and Human and Social Recovery Framework, National Disaster Resilience Strategy and Queensland Emergency Management Assurance Framework, to guide the process and direct the formulation of findings and recommendations:

Community Engagement – We will engage with citizens and local authorities between and during events, to ensure responses are flexible and adaptable to local need and changing community and social structures. We will ensure that feedback mechanisms are developed which will inform appropriate post event community development activities.

Customer Service – We will ensure communication is prompt, accurate and clear and all services provided are honest, fair and helpful. We will endeavor to minimise the number of times a customer has to provide their story and that customers who have been impacted by the disaster receive the assistance they require.

Resilience – We will respect the community's capability to direct their own recovery while helping to ensure their safety by empowering people to self-plan, prepare for and recover from a disaster. We will encourage communities to take an active role in helping one another to rebuild and provide support and hope.

Resources – Our recovery network is always ready to be deployed and the welfare and safety of staff and volunteers is of the utmost importance to us. We endeavour to build and utilise the unique skills and capabilities of our workforce and other organisations to ensure that the right services are provided at the right time in the right place.

Accountability – We commit to learn and improve from every recovery experience by listening to the feedback of members of the public, staff and volunteers, and recovery partners. We will continue to develop effective relationships, strategies and plans with government agencies and other stakeholders to ensure the most effective recovery responses are achieved.

Local Community – We will collaborate with business and other organisations to drive and rebuild the community by utilising local expertise, resources and volunteer networks to help individuals and families cope with and recover from a disaster. We will ensure we have an in-depth understanding of the community context and demographics so we can provide the most appropriate assistance to our customers.

Stakeholder consultation comprises the most critical input to inform the review process.

Consultation

Stakeholder consultation comprises the most critical input to inform the review process. As such, the Review has undertaken a significant consultation program to include the views and contributions of a wide range of key stakeholders involved in matters concerning disaster and community recovery.

Stakeholders include officers delivering and supporting recovery services within the Department, as well as key stakeholders across both government and non-government sectors (including Members of Parliament), other jurisdictions and members of the public.

The Customer First Design Centre, Department of the Premier and Cabinet conducted research and held consultations with members of the public and NGOs to provide advice and recommendations to the Review with regard to customer-centric priorities and design.

Consultation methods have included a range of techniques, including face-to-face meetings, telephone interviews, electronic survey activities and desktop reviews of relevant documentation (for example, policies, procedures, reports, manuals and briefs).

A list of stakeholders consulted for the review is provided at pages 29–30.

Governance

A Steering Committee established for the review provided guidance and direction, comprising Chief Executive Officers (or their representatives) of key recovery partner agencies, including:

- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (Chair)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Public Safety Business Agency
- Queensland Reconstruction Authority
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation.

The review also established a partnership with the Queensland Government Inspector General of Emergency Management to provide guidance and input on the review direction and products at key points throughout the process. The Inspector General acted as an observer to the Steering Committee.

The State Human and Social Recovery Committee, comprising senior representatives from key government agencies and NGOs, also provided input to inform the review direction and products.

The Department convened a Roundtable meeting with experts and stakeholders to assist in assuring the review outcomes by providing specialist guidance and input.

On 21 May 2015, the Department convened a Roundtable meeting with experts and stakeholders to assist in assuring the review outcomes by providing specialist guidance and input. Roundtable participants included:

- Dr Rob Gordon – has advised the Red Cross and governments on how to assist individuals and whole communities as they rebuild and recover
 - Professor Kevin Ronan – Foundation Professor in Psychology and Chair in Clinical Psychology, at CQ University Australia and Chair of the Disaster Reference Group of the Australian Psychological Society
 - Mr Mark Stratton – National Consultant, Disaster Recovery, Social Recovery Reference Group of the ANZEMC Recovery Sub-Committee
 - NGOs, including those on the Human and Social Recovery Committee and others
 - Representatives from key Queensland Government agencies.
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The review proposes 36 recommendations for Community Recovery service delivery.

Summary of Recommendations

Roles and Responsibilities

Recommendation 1: Develop an overall operational and investment model and common operating processes for Community Recovery and map the capabilities, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders across locations, and interoperability with other disaster response and recovery agencies.

Recommendation 2: Work with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to ensure community recovery policies, programs, procedures and practices continue to be aligned with overall national and state disaster relief and recovery arrangements.

Recommendation 3: Work with the Department of Housing and Public Works to streamline administration of Essential Household and Contents and Structural Assistance grants.

Recommendation 4: Develop a standardised communications pack and protocols for elected officials, to include general information that is kept up-to-date between disaster events and updated during events (incl. daily situational reports), to support local communication for Community Recovery.

Recommendation 5: Review agreements for Community Recovery services provided by NGOs to ensure value for money through maximising their capacity under existing funding allocations and embedding consistent service pricing for additional recovery services above these obligations, with consideration to broader, more flexible procurement arrangements such as Standing Offer Arrangements.

Recommendation 6: Develop a program to build the capabilities (including business continuity/resilience) and promote inclusion of community-based organisations in Community Recovery governance and service delivery.

Recommendation 7: Review current agreements, and establish new agreements where none currently exist, with business organisations for the provision of solutions to contribute to improving Community Recovery outcomes.

Recommendation 8: Develop Community Recovery resilience and engagement programs, with core elements for vulnerable people and multi-channel communication options for those with impairment or language barriers.

The review proposes 36 recommendations for Community Recovery service delivery.

Information and Processes

Recommendation 9: Negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to explore opportunities for data sharing.

Recommendation 10: Develop mechanisms to better utilise damage assessment data for Community Recovery response planning, including outreach visits to impacted residences and validating grants applications, and ensure that the data is fit for this purpose.

Recommendation 11: Provide access to damage assessment information to NGOs.

Recommendation 12: Develop processes for the Department and NGOs to contribute to damage assessment data to input residences that have been attended to avoid duplication of efforts between and within organisations.

Recommendation 13: Establish mechanisms with local councils and NGOs to share data on affected individuals and vulnerable people within their local communities.

Recommendation 14: Adapt the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's Premier's Disaster Relief Portal and client relationship management system for Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme grants applications and payments, Immediate Hardship Assistance grants in particular.

Recommendation 15: Implement a tiered payment method structure, with EFT or reverse-EFTPOS as the first payment option available to Immediate Hardship Assistance grants applicants, debit card as the second option (if an EFT may take too long to reach their financial institution, or reverse EFTOPS not available), and cheque as a final option where other payment methods are not possible.

Recommendation 16: Develop data modelling capabilities to analyse event information and location of impact demographics to assist in Community Recovery planning and response.

Recommendation 17: Implement a streamlined process for the Community Recovery Hotline to simplify and accelerate the initial needs assessment (short and long term needs) of customers.

Recommendation 18: Work with other agencies to strengthen Community Recovery communication methods, to also include the more proactive use and monitoring of social media.

The review proposes 36 recommendations for Community Recovery service delivery.

Recommendation 19: Increase use of mobile ICT devices, including tablets and smartphones, particularly in the field for recovery staff.

Recommendation 20: Establish agreements with communications providers to assist in providing devices and solutions to address connectivity issues and network outages.

Workforce and Capability

Recommendation 21: Determine a new operating model and command structure for Community Recovery operations, including appointment of a Community Recovery Coordinator to coordinate human and social recovery operations across the State.

Recommendation 22: Appoint a State Recovery Coordinator, to work with the State Disaster and Community Recovery coordinators in coordinating recovery operations across the State, using a scalable model for authority to come into effect dependent on scale and impact of event.

Recommendation 23: Review processes, procedures and responsibilities for setting up operational recovery facilities to ensure that they are adequate and implemented consistently across all regions.

Recommendation 24: Implement mechanisms to ensure that handovers and briefings/debriefings for recovery workers are completed in all cases; before, during and after deployments.

Recommendation 25: Review current desktop manuals for recovery roles to ensure that they are up to date, content is adequate and electronically published, including central and regional office Community Recovery roles and on-site recovery facility roles.

Recommendation 26: Increase the use of face-to-face training delivery methods, and explore options for assisting in the training of other NGOs' staff and volunteers.

Recommendation 27: Review training content to cover more human and social recovery topics, including dealing with vulnerable, emotional or challenging customers—for example, psychological first aid, and explore options for ensuring minimum competencies.

Recommendation 28: Develop specific training modules for specialised recovery roles (for example, initial needs assessments, recovery facility managers/coordinators, etc.).

The review proposes 36 recommendations for Community Recovery service delivery.

Recommendation 29: Explore alternative development opportunities to leverage the skills of more experienced recovery staff, including 'role shadowing' and training between events.

Recommendation 30: Implement a process to consider non-recovery related professional and life experiences of staff, as well as recovery experience, to help in directing the allocation of individuals to particular recover roles.

Recommendation 31: Develop a marketing campaign to sell the positive and personally rewarding elements of Community Recovery work to attract and retain staff.

Recommendation 32: Explore alternative arrangements for transportation and accommodation logistics, including using the local knowledge of regional offices, coordinating with other agencies and leveraging the logistics capabilities of the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

Recommendation 33: Develop an annual program of stakeholder engagement events, such as practice and scenario exercises to include government agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders, and convene an annual Community Recovery Roundtable or Summit with academics/experts and industry stakeholders to network and workshop recovery topics.

Recommendation 34: Develop a structured program to ensure that opportunities for continual improvement are assessed in conjunction with stakeholders and implemented following each event.

Recommendation 35: Establish an open, online information sharing hub for stakeholders to connect and access Community Recovery-specific information and resources, within the one-stop-portal of the Queensland Government disaster management website.

Recommendation 36: Include academic research in knowledge management practices to help mature the knowledge base of the recovery network.

Roles assigned to organisations should be appropriate and considered in the broader context of the interests and capabilities of other organisations within the network.

Part 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Clear and indoctrinated roles and responsibilities for all organisations across the human and social recovery network are essential to ensure that services are provided to customers seamlessly and efficiently. Roles assigned to organisations should be appropriate and considered in the broader context of the interests and capabilities of other organisations within the network. A 'one government', or even 'one network', approach to customer service is needed to help improve outcomes and by addressing barriers in delivering the most effective Community Recovery services possible.

Government

The review has found that the majority of the Department's Community Recovery resources and efforts have become concentrated on addressing the financial needs of individuals impacted by disaster events. This is the case not only in the lead up to and immediate aftermath of an event, but also for considerable time following the immediate Relief phase of emergency management. There are a range of reasons why this has come about—as discussed in *Part 2: Information and Processes* of this report—mostly resulting from the resource intensive processing and payment of Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme grants¹. Further, during the immediate period following an event, the resources of non-Community Recovery related functions across the department, other agencies that contribute staff under the Queensland Government Ready Reserve scheme and NGOs are diverted to address the growing demand for grants payments.

The network of stakeholders with an interest or role in Community Recovery is diverse and covers a range of groups with varying levels of involvement, including members of the public, government agencies (local, state and federal), NGOs and business industries. While the Department is the lead functional agency for Community Recovery in Queensland, under the State Disaster Management Plan, it is not entirely clear to stakeholders what this role includes specifically. Although the Plan provides a high level description of the role of the Department in Community Recovery (referred to as Human and Social Recovery in the Plan) it does not include sufficient detail to inform on how these high level responsibility descriptions materialise into actual services. Further, being buried in an appendix of the Plan and scattered across a number of websites does not make the information accessible to those who need to consume it.

¹ Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme grants include: (1) Immediate Hardship Assistance; (2) Essential Household Contents; (3) Structural Assistance.

The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders under the umbrella of Community Recovery are not clearly articulated in one easy to access and digest source. Stakeholders have different strengths and weaknesses, both between and during events. Further, to complement rebalancing of the role of Community Recovery, in planning and responding to longer-term recovery objectives, the Department should work closely with other organisations that contribute capabilities targeted at similar outcomes (e.g. Queensland Health, mental health services).

During times of emergency and response planning, the lack of clarity concerning roles, responsibilities and capabilities can cause confusion, inefficiencies and duplication of effort both within and between organisations. Some organisations, particularly local service providers, are not clear on how, where and when they fit into recovery or transition between response and recovery phases, or how they interoperate with other agencies in this space. The overall model for Community Recovery, specifically, is at times more implicit and not clearly articulated in any one place or accessible to the wider audience of stakeholders outside of the Department.

It is important that Community Recovery roles and responsibilities, and their interdependent relationships with each other, are clearly defined so that organisations can work effectively together in planning and responding to disaster events and members of the public can effectively direct their own readiness and recovery.

Recommendation 1: Develop an overall operational and investment model and common operating processes for Community Recovery and map the capabilities, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders across locations, and interoperability with other disaster response and recovery agencies.

Over time, the Department has not kept pace with all service delivery trends in the Community Recovery space and does not currently have the most contemporary solutions in place to effectively administer emergency-related financial assistance in line with customer expectations. Other agencies however, such as the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and Department of Housing and Public Works, have developed capabilities that could be leveraged to help streamline processes and improve Community Recovery outcomes. For example:

- Queensland Reconstruction Authority has developed a range of ICT solutions that could be leveraged by the Department to enhance Community Recovery services and processes—in particular, the Premier’s Disaster Relief Portal could be adapted to significantly streamline administration of Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme grants.
 - Department of Housing and Public Works possess residential construction capabilities that could help in administering Structural Assistance and Essential Household Contents grants.
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It is important that Community Recovery roles and responsibilities, and their interdependent relationships with each other, are clearly defined so that organisations can work effectively together.

Roles and responsibilities must also be considered within the context of other changing policy factors. Following the release of the Productivity Commission report into natural disaster funding on 1 May 2015, the Commonwealth Government has initiated consultation with states and territories in relation to reforms of the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). Although the Commonwealth Government's position has not been confirmed, it is possible that some aspects of the NDRRA funding model will change from one where costs are recouped by the states to an upfront funding package based on an impact assessment of activated disasters. Discussions on whether this sort of model could be applied to community recovery funding are continuing. Further, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority have recently undertaken a review of the Queensland Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (outcome still to be confirmed pending consideration by Government in July 2015) which recommends changes to assistance available under, access to and eligibility criteria for Immediate Hardship Assistance grants.

Recommendation 2: Work with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to ensure community recovery policies, programs, procedures and practices continue to be aligned with overall national and state disaster relief and recovery arrangements.

Recommendation 3: Work with the Department of Housing and Public Works to streamline administration of Essential Household and Contents and Structural Assistance grants.

Members of Parliament and Local Councilors are also important stakeholders in Community Recovery. They maintain important local communication networks, resources and relationships with other stakeholders that can help to improve recovery outcomes both for government as well as customers. Elected officials and their offices also deal with distressed and frustrated people and often receive a high volume of requests for information and assistance, as well as complaints. As elected representatives they have a responsibility to ensure the best possible outcomes for their respective constituencies. In turn, government agencies have a responsibility to support elected officials to achieve this, while leveraging their local networks to help improve recovery outcomes. At present, some efforts are made to keep officials informed with up-to-date information for them to share with their electorates, both from the Minister's office as well as the Department, but at times there have been some gaps occurring in this information flow in some locations.

Recommendation 4: Develop a standardised communications pack and protocols for elected officials, to include general information that is kept up-to-date between disaster events and updated during events (incl. daily situational reports), to support local communication for Community Recovery.

The Department invests a significant amount of funds in personal and support services across Queensland.

Non-Government Organisations

The Department invests a significant amount of funds in personal and support services across Queensland, yet there is limited understanding of when and how these services might be formally engaged during recovery activities and to what capacity. Although there are existing service agreements (contracts) between the Department and NGOs, there is limited clarity or consistency with these in regard to the specifications and costs associated with the additional Community Recovery activities or services they are contracted to provide during activations. During a disaster event, the lack of structure and contractual agreement with NGOs for specific services to assist in Community Recovery responses has been at times negotiated 'on the fly', sometimes resulting in adhoc pricing agreements and invoicing arrangements.

Contracts and their terms and conditions should ensure the mutual benefit of all parties with a view to achieving value for money. Contracts should ensure that all parties are protected by comprehensive, fair and clear agreement on outputs/outcomes and cost, taking into account the unique strengths of the service provider. For example, some NGOs may have the networks and resources to contribute volunteer workforces while other NGOs may have other more specialised capabilities that could benefit specific recovery outcomes. Further, the philosophical approach to service delivery of some NGOs is not always aligned with that of the lead functional agency and other supporting government agencies responsible for delivering recovery services. At times this has caused tension and disagreement between NGO and government workforces, which can contribute to on-the-ground inefficiencies and suboptimal customer experiences.

Other agreements between Government and NGOs, such as the Department of the Premier and Cabinet Memorandum of Understanding with Non-Government Organisations, should also be included in considerations when contextualising and reviewing service delivery arrangements within the broader setting across government.

In the past, Government has tended to partner more with the larger NGOs in delivering Community Recovery services. This has resulted in these large NGOs becoming more experienced, and potentially more commercially advantaged, in this specialised field than some of the smaller, less experienced community-based organisations. Further, business continuity of community-based organisations can be another factor impeding their involvement; some are still recovering from the previous disaster when another strikes. The invaluable networks of local knowledge and resources that community-based organisations can contribute should be supported to participate more in recovery planning and responses.

Recommendation 5: Review agreements for Community Recovery services provided by NGOs to ensure value for money through maximising their capacity under existing funding allocations and embedding consistent service pricing for additional recovery

While there is commercial gain for businesses to have their brands seen assisting communities recovery from disaster events, some have expressed their corporate/social responsibility and may be interested in playing a bigger role.

services above these obligations, with consideration to broader, more flexible procurement arrangements such as Standing Offer Arrangements.

Recommendation 6: Develop a program to build the capabilities (including business continuity/resilience) and promote inclusion of community-based organisations in Community Recovery governance and service delivery.

Business

Private industry organisations possess the resources, networks and supply chains to contribute greatly to Community Recovery outcomes. While there is commercial gain for businesses to have their brands seen assisting communities recovery from disaster events, some have expressed their corporate/social responsibility and may be interested in playing a bigger role.

For example:

- utility companies may be able to contribute by providing reliable data on impacted residences and solutions to address extended outages
- retail organisations may be able to contribute by providing food and other goods such as clothing and medication
- communications providers may be able to contribute by helping to restore network outages and providing other communication solutions (e.g. ICT devices, tablets, mobile phones)
- financial institutions may be able to contribute solutions to assist in grant payments (e.g. cards, cash, mobile branches, mobile ATMs).

Some agreements are already in place for business solutions—for example, the whole-of-government contract with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and the Department's contract with eMerchants for debit cards—although these relationships may need further development to respond to the emerging needs of Community Recovery. At times, other businesses may be enlisted to help with recovery priorities—for example, supermarket retailers providing food vouchers during the TC Marcia response—but these agreements have been typically negotiated on an as needs basis, during the event. Government and industry would benefit from a more coordinated approach to including business organisations in Community Recovery efforts.

Recommendation 7: Review current agreements, and establish new agreements where none currently exist, with business organisations for the provision of solutions to contribute to improving Community Recovery outcomes.

People facing disadvantage, such as those in poverty, migrants, refugees, children, older people, people with disabilities, people who are homeless or transient, and people living in poor quality housing, are more vulnerable at all stages of a disaster; before, during, and after it strikes.

Members of the Public

Communities that develop a high level of resilience are better able to withstand a crisis event and have an enhanced ability to recover from the ongoing impacts. However, some community members are unable or unwilling to self-recover, increasing the demand for government and NGOs to fill the void and perpetuating the cycle of overreliance on assistance from others. People facing disadvantage, such as those in poverty, migrants, refugees, children, older people, people with disabilities, people who are homeless or transient, and people living in poor quality housing, are more vulnerable at all stages of a disaster; before, during, and after it strikes. These people are considered 'socially vulnerable' in the face of a disaster.

Currently, there are a number of ways that government promotes and supports community resilience, including communication campaigns such as 'Get Ready', but these programs are not directly focused on those who are already socially vulnerable. Communication tailored for vulnerable people may help promote their resilience, although they may require additional assistance and support to be better prepared for and handle the impacts of a disaster event. Further, during disasters, and similarly post event, individuals move into a social structure they are not accustomed to. A more focused approach on building disaster resilience capabilities with vulnerable people may help reduce demand on Community Recovery services.

Recommendation 8: Develop Community Recovery resilience and engagement programs, with core elements for vulnerable people and multi-channel communication options for those with impairment or language barriers.

Across the emergency management network, there is a wealth of information that can help the Department in responding to disaster events.

Part 2: Information and Processes

Across the emergency management network, there is a wealth of information that can help the Department in responding to disaster events. Although there are no real barriers to using this information, the Department needs to look at different approaches to working with other organisations and sharing data to improve Community Recovery outcomes. In the spirit of 'one government', there is a revived push to work together with a view to providing the best and most seamless services to customers of government.

Data sharing

Other government agencies maintain data sets that could make a significant contribution to assisting the Department to improve better plan and respond to disaster events. While there are obvious opportunities for data sharing across Queensland Government, there are also prospects to collaborate with both local and federal government agencies to improve recovery outcomes.

The Commonwealth Government maintains data (combined between sources from the Australian Taxation Office, Medicare and Centrelink) which could assist the Queensland Government in validating and paying applications for financial assistance. Most people in the community would have a customer account with one or more Commonwealth Government agency, with personal information that may include current residential address, family profile (spouse and number of dependent children) and bank account details. This information could assist the Queensland Government to validate whether an applicant was claiming for the correct address, for the correct number of people in their family and allow a direct deposit straight into their bank account.

Recommendation 9: Negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to explore opportunities for data sharing.

Queensland Government agencies also hold valuable information that could assist the Department in delivering more targeted Community Recovery services. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' Rapid Damage Assessment teams attend disaster impacted locations and assess damage to property, water levels, among other things. While this information is currently available to the department, it is not consistently used across the state to plan Community Recovery services or assess applications for financial assistance. Other stakeholders such as NGOs have also indicated that they would greatly benefit from being able to access this information to assist them in planning and responding to disaster events. Further, it would be especially helpful if the Department and NGOs were able to contribute to this data set by inputting

Managing a paper-based grants process across disparate locations in an emergency situation also causes the increased risk of applicant fraud.

residences that have been attended to avoid duplication of efforts between and within organisations.

Recommendation 10: Develop mechanisms to better utilise damage assessment data for Community Recovery response planning, including outreach visits to impacted residences and validating grants applications, and ensure that the data is fit for this purpose.

Recommendation 11: Provide access to damage assessment information to NGOs.

Recommendation 12: Develop processes for the Department and NGOs to contribute to damage assessment data to input residences that have been attended to avoid duplication of efforts between and within organisations.

Local councils and NGOs also maintain important local intelligence on certain cohorts within local community areas. For example, Councils and NGOs may have invaluable information on personal data relevant to the support of affected individuals and vulnerable people within a particular community. This information could assist the Department in planning and responding at the local level. The Local Government Association of Queensland may also be able to assist establishing data sharing mechanisms with the Queensland Government.

Recommendation 13: Establish mechanisms with local councils and NGOs to share data on affected individuals and vulnerable people within their local communities.

Grants Applications and Processes

At present, Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme grants application and processing processes are predominantly paper-based. Although some parts of the process, mostly after the point of decision to pay onwards, are handled electronically, paper-based processes have caused a significant amount of waste in resources and time and contributed to the majority of customer complaints. This inefficient way of administering grants not only diverts finite resources away from other recovery priorities, but also contributes to the provision of a poor service to vulnerable customers.

Managing a paper-based grants process across disparate locations in an emergency situation also causes the increased risk of applicant fraud. It can be all but impossible to know if someone has attended several different Community Recovery facilities within the same day and received the same grant at each visit. Interestingly, all states and territories across Australia currently also use a paper-based process for their immediate emergency-related financial assistance

Use of other more direct and automated means for payment could help to avoid error and streamline processes and timeframes to pay applicants.

applications. The issues experienced by Queensland in administering a paper-based process are shared across the nation.

Paper forms also make it extremely difficult for government to manage the 'customer experience', as enquiries to the Community Recovery Hotline and online/application enquiries for assistance or follow up cannot be matched to existing applications that have been submitted. Further, forms can easily be misplaced in turbulent environments at emergency locations, which causes delays for the customer and has resulted in the need for them to repeat the arduous application process a number of times in some cases. This is understandably frustrating for the customer, but also frustrating for government officers and NGO volunteers who are doing their best to deliver a services within poor circumstances.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority's Premier's Disaster Relief Portal and client relationship management system could be easily adapted to handle the application and processing of grants, Immediate Hardship Assistance grants in particular. The Portal not only provides internet-based access to allow claimants to submit their applications online, but also has functionality to significantly streamline the application and eligibility requirements processes. Other data, such as Commonwealth Government data or Queensland Transport drivers license data, could be input into the systems to help validate application details and identify applicants.

By using Queensland Reconstruction Authority ICT solutions to receive and process grants applications, Government would swiftly turnaround the customer experience from one that has in the past been time consuming and frustrating to one that is accessible, contemporary and easy to follow. Moving from a paper-based system would also help government significantly reduce fraud and loss of applications, and streamline reporting requirements.

Recommendation 14: Adapt the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's Premier's Disaster Relief Portal and client relationship management system for Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme grants applications and payments, Immediate Hardship Assistance grants in particular.

The current preferred method for paying Immediate Hardship Assistance grants to eligible applicants is a debit card that the department sources from a vendor (eMerchants) and activates once a grant fund amount has been approved for payment. This process is also resource intensive and time consuming, with disjointed processes and systems used to approve an application for payment and then activate the card with the approved amount. The debit card processes have also resulted in duplicate, over and underpayments. Further, although not impossible, the warehousing and accessibility of debit cards can be challenging in emergency situations.

By calculating the type and scale of a disaster event with the location it is expected to impact and the demographics of that area, data modelling can be used to inform scenario and response planning exercises.

Use of other more direct and automated means for payment could help to avoid error and streamline processes and timeframes to pay applicants. For example, electronic funds transfer (EFT) would reduce payment delays and errors by sending funds straight from the system direct to the applicants nominated bank account. Reverse-EFTPOS could also provide a more efficient payment method for some applicants and reduce the overreliance on debit cards.

Recommendation 15: Implement a tiered payment method structure, with EFT or reverse-EFTPOS as the first payment option available to Immediate Hardship Assistance grants applicants, debit card as the second option (if an EFT may take too long to reach their financial institution, or reverse EFTOPS not available), and cheque as a final option where other payment methods are not possible.

Data Modelling and Scenario Planning

Although the Department has standardised recovery response plans and processes in place across regions, data could be better used to analyse events and their impacts to determine the scale and complexity of recovery operations. By calculating the type and scale of a disaster event with the location it is expected to impact and the demographics of that area, data modelling can be used to inform scenario and response planning exercises. Some statistics which may be used in the tool include, for example (but are not limited to):

- Age groups
- Family composition (e.g. single parent, no children, children)
- Household Composition (e.g. multiple family households)
- Dwelling, by tenure (e.g. owner, renting)
- Dwelling, by structure (e.g. house, apartment, caravan)
- Cultural status (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse)
- Vulnerability (e.g. persons with a profound or severe disability)
- Index of relative socio economic disadvantage
- Remoteness
- Employment (e.g. unemployed, employed)
- Household income.

Certain 'assumptions' can then be calculated from the data, including (for example): areas with a lower socio economic rating may have a higher demand for financial assistance; households with children may be more vulnerable and require more varied support (i.e. financial assistance as well as food, clothing and counselling); and older residents may require more outreach to their

Explore alternative models for the Community Recovery Hotline and initial needs assessment processes.

homes to offer assistance. Following each event, data should be input back into the system to continually improve calculations and predictions for future events.

Recommendation 16: Develop data modelling capabilities to analyse event information and location of impact demographics to assist in Community Recovery planning and response.

Community Recovery Hotline and Initial Customer Assessment

The process for initial assessment of customers who engage via the Community Recovery Hotline operated by Smart Service Queensland (SSQ) involves call centre operators taking initial personal information from customers who are then referred to teams within the Department for a more detailed needs assessment. Departmental staff return phone calls to applicants to talk through the lengthy grants application forms to determine eligibility for assistance. This process has meant that the customer experience has been cumbersome and confusing; requiring customers to tell their story numerous times.

This process is also problematic due to the additional pressure it places on resources in the Department, which in turn causes delays for the customer waiting to be called back. Some customers call back themselves or submit a new online/application enquiry while they wait to be called back; without an ICT system to handle applications it generates a new enquiry for the same person. This causes waste of resources and time, as well as frustration for both the customer and government employee attempting to return calls.

The web form used by SSQ sends the call centre captured information to a mailbox accessed by the Department, which then requires the information to then be manually re-entered onto the application forms by departmental staff conducting the detailed needs assessment.

The Department should explore alternative models for the Community Recovery Hotline and initial needs assessment processes, including (but not limited to):

- SSQ to undertake the role of needs assessment upfront, using an amended version of the existing web form/or another system, taking all the necessary information for the application and advising customers of their eligibility, and determining any longer-term recovery needs for referral to other organisations and NGOs
 - SSQ to only give general information about how to apply, locations of recovery facilities, etc., and refer basic customer details through to recovery staff without asking customers to provide any information or tell their stories
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Effective communication is essential in providing critical information to customers and other stakeholders between and during events.

- Allow customers to choose their preferred channel where they could apply at a recovery facility, on the phone through SSQ or online, all of which would then go through to the recovery staff to continue the process.

Recommendation 17: Implement a streamlined process for the Community Recovery Hotline to simplify and accelerate the initial needs assessment (short and long term needs) of customers.

Communications and Social Media

Effective communication is essential in providing critical information to customers and other stakeholders between and during events. Communication can also help to build community resilience, direct customers to recovery services and involve other stakeholders such as NGOs and elected officials. It is estimated that up to 80 per cent of people² in some communities do not regularly interact with government agencies so are not familiar with how or where to engage for particular services if needed during an emergency. Communication campaigns and engagement channels need to be cognisant of this to ensure that all people are able to find the services they require.

Social media is increasingly being used by customers and stakeholders to access and share information on emergency management and Community Recovery matters. Social media channels are becoming a social norm and familiar place for people to share and seek information on what is important to them. Although social media will not replace traditional communication platforms such as radio, TV and internet, it cannot be ignored as an effective way of pushing information out as well as pulling information in. Although, social media requires additional attention to manage; the Department will need to be more proactive in not only advertising information but also monitoring the posts of members of the public and other stakeholders to ensure that misinformation isn't spread as a result.

Other agencies, including the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, had established a well followed and respected social media presence. The Department, in considering any changes in communication strategy, should also ensure that it

² Dr Rob Gordon, clinical psychologist who has spent the past 30 years working with people affected by emergencies and disasters.

The need for more use of mobile devices cannot be ignored, especially if processes move from being paper-based to electronic and automated.

communication activities are coordinated with other existing, emergency management related campaigns by other agencies—for example, ‘Get Ready’ and ‘If It’s Flooded Forget It’.

Recommendation 18: Work with other agencies to strengthen Community Recovery communication methods, to also include the more proactive use and monitoring of social media.

ICT Devices and Connectivity

Currently there is limited use of contemporary ICT devices in the field for Community Recovery. The Department currently uses laptops and is trialing tablet devices, but more investment in better ICT equipment is needed to ensure that the services provided to customers is contemporary and efficient. There are however some limitations with using mobile devices in disaster affected locations, such as network connectivity issues and outages, power supply outages to charge the devices, weathering of sensitive electronic components and the costs associated with stockpiling and keeping up to date a large number of devices that otherwise may sit idle between events. Although, the need for more use of mobile devices cannot be ignored, especially if processes move from being paper-based to electronic and automated.

There is also limited availability of mobile phones for staff conducting outreach visits in dangerous locations, which is a concern for their safety and security. It also limits their ability to conduct their duties as they cannot liaise with colleagues or coordination, and is also an impediment for the coordination units as they attempt to oversee and direct operations with staff they cannot communicate with. Relatively inexpensive pre-paid smart phones are available from communication providers and would allow staff to not only communicate but also use GPS, access the internet, assist customers in completing online applications on the spot and use the Queensland Reconstruction Authority’s Deployment Application to regularly ‘check in’ to confirm their whereabouts and safety with coordination units.

Recommendation 19: Increase use of mobile ICT devices, including tablets and smartphones, particularly in the field for recovery staff.

Recommendation 20: Establish agreements with communications providers to assist in providing devices and solutions to address connectivity issues and network outages.

It is extremely important to support recovery staff and nurture relationships to help ensure the adequate resourcing of recovery operations.

Part 3: Workforce and Capability

In addition to the critical day to day roles of staff who maintain and coordinate Community Recovery functions between and during disaster events, for whom it is their regular role, the majority of the workforce delivering Community Recovery services during an activation is made up of people from across government, volunteers and NGOs. It is extremely important to support recovery staff and nurture relationships to help ensure the adequate resourcing of recovery operations.

Local Command and Control

At some points during Community Recovery responses, particularly during the initial response periods, there has been an apparent lack of clarity about authority for coordination, action and command of recovery activities and facilities. This causes issues on location and has at times resulted in significant inefficiencies between staff and impeded interoperability with recovery partners who are trying to work with us to establish recovery services on the ground. The lack of effective command and control has also seriously impacted on customers as they attempt to navigate through the disarray during what is an already extremely difficult time for them.

To help maintain control and coordination during the early stages of recovery, depending on the type and scale of the event, the Department deploys specialist, or 'surge', teams to quickly establish the recovery response, operations and processes. Specialist teams are comprised of the most experienced departmental recovery officers from across the state. This approach is usually very effective when required and helps to restore an element of calm to an otherwise chaotic environment.

In Community Recovery environments, during initial response periods which can be chaotic and face rapidly emerging circumstances, it is important that operations are authoritatively coordinated across the many government agencies, NGOs and other organisations. A more assertive and structured role is needed to support the recovery network and customers through a smooth and relatively stable process to establish operations and provide services. This will help improve the experiences of staff and the organisations that we rely on the help us in providing services and most importantly the customer.

Recommendation 21: Determine a new operating model and command structure for Community Recovery operations, including appointment of a Community Recovery Coordinator to coordinate human and social recovery operations across the State.

Training for staff with a role in recovery should also be considered for other organisations who contribute their workforces and resources, including NGOs and volunteers.

Recommendation 22: Appoint a State Recovery Coordinator, to work with the State Disaster and Community Recovery coordinators in coordinating recovery operations across the State, using a scalable model for authority to come into effect dependent on scale and impact of event.

Processes and Procedures

Although the Department has some standardised Community Recovery processes and procedures for regions to operationalise when setting up recovery operations (i.e. recovery centres, hubs and outreach coordination, etc.), these plans are not always implemented consistently or effectively. At times some operational facilities have not been established as effectively as possible; in some cases it took several days for facilities to operate as they should. Ineffective set-up of a facility may be a simple issue but causes significant flow-on effects, causing inefficiencies in process and confusion between recovery workers, partner NGOs and customers.

Sometimes this occurs because staff do not have all the material and instructions necessary to establish a facility. For example, a floor plan showing where to place counters to handle customers, where to place these counters in relation to entry and exit points to effectively flow the queues of people, and where to place representatives from NGOs. Some of these types of process and procedure do exist but aren't always consistently used.

Handover between changing shifts of recovery workers is also an important procedure that hasn't always been followed in all cases. Ensuring that service continuity is preserved by supporting incoming staff with critical information on emerging issues and priorities is something that must always occur both for the benefit of staff and customers. Without effective handover staff become frustrated when they haven't been adequately briefed on the latest circumstances where they are working and customers may experience a diminished service experience.

It is also important to help support staff by effectively briefing and therefore preparing them for what they should expect so that they may better deal with the confronting nature of recovery work. Similarly, recovery workers may need support in helping them to 'reset' themselves before returning for subsequent deployments. They may also need support to 'reset' themselves both personally and professionally before returning to their day jobs, which in most cases will be a stark contrast to their recovery work environment and may require them readjusting.

Matching individuals to particular recovery roles is essential to ensure that staff are comfortable and able to confidently fulfil their roles and customers receive the best service possible.

Recommendation 23: Review processes, procedures and responsibilities for setting up operational recovery facilities to ensure that they are adequate and implemented consistently across all regions.

Recommendation 24: Implement mechanisms to ensure that handovers and briefings/debriefings for recovery workers are completed in all cases; before, during and after deployments.

Recommendation 25: Review current desktop manuals for recovery roles to ensure that they are up to date, content is adequate and electronically published, including central and regional office Community Recovery roles and on-site recovery facility roles.

Training for Staff

Currently, training for recovery staff is predominantly delivered via online modules prior to being deployed. The training takes approximately 3 hours to complete, while industry standards show that online training should be between 15-30 minutes per sitting for learning to be effective. Although staff aren't required to complete the training in one full 3 hour sitting, this does occur in cases where people are rushed or completing it at the last minute. Training for staff with a role in recovery should also be considered for other organisations who contribute their workforces and resources, including non-government organisations and volunteers.

Content of the online training modules is also predominantly focused on how to complete the application forms for financial assistance. Although the forms may be complicated and require substantial training for staff, the overall training content does not prepare people for the more human and social aspect of what they face when delivering services to vulnerable people in challenging environments. For example, staff should be well prepared on how to effectively deal with emotional people who are significantly distressed after losing their home as a result of a natural disaster. Additional face-to-face training and briefings are provided to staff when they arrive at their location, but this is also focused on grant application forms as well as timesheets and other HR matters.

Training content is also too generalised for some people and does not include specific modules for some of the more specialised recovery roles. For example, roles such as officers who conduct initial needs assessments of customers or recovery facility managers and coordinators, may have more complex responsibilities and require additional training and support. Another method for supporting and developing staff in their recovery roles may also be to implement formal 'role shadowing' practices, where more experienced staff buddy up with less experienced staff to

The satisfaction that comes with helping those in need can be the best motivator to encourage staff to volunteer for Community Recovery work.

impart their capabilities. This approach could also be extended to training between disaster events, with more experienced recovery workers training others.

Recommendation 26: Increase the use of face-to-face training delivery methods, and explore options for assisting in the training of other non-government organisations' staff and volunteers.

Recommendation 27: Review training content to cover more human and social recovery topics, including dealing with vulnerable, emotional or challenging customers—for example, psychological first aid, and explore options for ensuring minimum competencies.

Recommendation 28: Develop specific training modules for specialised recovery roles (for example, initial needs assessments, recovery facility managers/coordinators, etc.).

Recommendation 29: Explore alternative development opportunities to leverage the skills of more experienced recovery staff, including 'role shadowing' and training between events.

Skills Matching and Incentives

Matching individuals to particular recovery roles is essential to ensure that staff are comfortable and able to confidently fulfil their roles and customers receive the best service possible. While there have been some attempts to match individuals to particular recovery roles, it has been mostly based on their previous Community Recovery experience. Although previous recovery experience is important, individuals may have other skills and experience that could benefit particular roles in the field.

People who are deployed for Community Recovery work also have valuable experience from their 'day jobs' and past professional and life experiences. For example, staff who have more experience and capability dealing with people, particularly vulnerable people, should be allocated to recovery roles that have direct customer contact. On the other hand, staff who are more comfortable with more technical or administrative roles should be allocated to recovery roles that are more focused on logistics, coordination or assessing and processing applications for financial assistance.

Community Recovery work can be an extremely rewarding experience for staff, which is the primary reason why many accept the role and its responsibilities. Although some staff may engage in recovery work for the financial incentives (i.e. overtime and penalty rates), others are attracted to it for the more personally rewarding aspects. That is, it is the satisfaction that comes

Nurturing and growing the collective knowledge and capabilities of all stakeholders in Community Recovery is extremely important to help ensure that continual improvement is embedded across the recovery network.

with helping those in need that can be the best motivator to encourage staff to volunteer for Community Recovery work, even when faced with challenging circumstances, difficult people and frustrating processes.

While some deployees may not be complimentary about their Community Recovery experience (for reasons discussed throughout this report), positive messages from people who were enriched by their recovery role and experiences could go a long way in balancing negative feedback and selling the positive side.

Recommendation 30: Implement a process to consider non-recovery related professional and life experiences of staff, as well as recovery experience, to help in directing the allocation of individuals to particular recover roles.

Recommendation 31: Develop a marketing campaign to sell the positive and personally rewarding elements of Community Recovery work to attract and retain staff.

Accommodation and Transport

The majority of arrangements for the transportation and accommodation of Community Recovery deployees is coordinated centrally by the Department in Brisbane. Although this can assist regional offices by freeing up their resources to deal with other recovery priorities, there are some disbenefits of this centralised logistics model. For example, lack of local knowledge when booking accommodation from Brisbane has caused issues where some deployees have been accommodated several hours' journey from their recovery place of work, when there was other accommodation not known to the coordination staff in Brisbane available closer to the workplace.

Lengthy journeys to recovery workplaces can cause significant issues, with staff missing breakfast and dinner meal times at their accommodation, diminished productivity and reduced time on-site to delivering services. In these situations staff often feel frustrated by lengthy travel times after an already difficult day. Although this is sometimes unavoidable due to lack of availability of local accommodation, at times this could have been avoided by using local knowledge in making accommodation arrangements.

There may also be efficiencies to be gained in coordinating transportation to and from deployment locations with other agencies, as well as booking accommodation. Other agencies, especially emergency service agencies, also require transportation for their staff to and from and accommodation within disaster locations. In this respect, the State Disaster Coordination Centre logistics capability may be able to assist in coordinating transportation requirements and accommodation options across agencies.

Bringing parties together to share their learnings and practice contemporary methods of recovery can help to ensure that service delivery remains at the forefront of best practice.

Recommendation 32: Explore alternative arrangements for transportation and accommodation logistics, including using the local knowledge of regional offices, coordinating with other agencies and leveraging the logistics capabilities of the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

Cross-sector Capability

Nurturing and growing the collective knowledge and capabilities of all stakeholders in Community Recovery is extremely important to help ensure that continual improvement is embedded across the recovery network. Bringing parties together to share their learnings and practice contemporary methods of recovery can help to ensure that service delivery remains at the forefront of best practice. Although there are some existing mechanisms to promote knowledge and capability development across the emergency management and response environments, it is acknowledged that a greater focus on the human and social aspects of recovery is needed.

There are also specialised areas within recovery that deserve extra attention, such as knowledge and interpretation of the complicated NDRRA. The NDRRA is a joint funding initiative of the Commonwealth and State Governments to provide disaster relief and recovery payments and infrastructure restoration to help communities recover from the effects of natural disasters. The arrangements are complex and detailed, and corporate knowledge of their content, interpretation and processes is critical to ensure that agencies are able to extract the highest amount of investment in services provided during an event activation.

Academic research should also have a formal role in knowledge management practices. There are a range of academic research projects being undertaken in universities across Australia, and internationally, which could contribute greatly to maturing the knowledge base of the recovery network. For example, Central Queensland University is undertaking research into community resilience following TC Marcia in the central Queensland region early-2015.

Recommendation 33: Develop an annual program of stakeholder engagement events, such as practice and scenario exercises to include government agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders, and convene an annual Community Recovery Roundtable or Summit with academics/experts and industry stakeholders to network and workshop recovery topics.

Recommendation 34: Develop a structured program to ensure that opportunities for continual improvement are assessed in conjunction with stakeholders and implemented following each event.

Recommendation 35: Establish an open, online information sharing hub for stakeholders to connect and access Community Recovery-specific information and resources, within the one-stop-portal of the Queensland Government disaster management website.

Recommendation 36: Include academic research in knowledge management practices to help mature the knowledge base of the recovery network.

The Department engaged with more than 600 people to inform the review, including government representatives, other jurisdictions, non-government organisations and members of the public.

Consultation

The Department engaged with more than 600 people to inform the review, including representatives from the following stakeholder groups:

Queensland Government

- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Queensland Reconstruction Authority
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- Public Safety Business Agency
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Science, Information and Technology and Innovation
- Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience
- Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Queensland Health.

Other Jurisdictions

- Department of Human Services, Commonwealth Government
- Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria
- Ministry of Civil Defense and Emergency Management, New Zealand
- National Consultant, Disaster Recovery, Social Recovery Reference Group of the ANZEMC Recovery Sub-Committee.

Non-Government and Private Industry

- Community Services Industry Alliance
 - Salvation Army Australia
 - UnitingCare Community
 - Australian Council of Social Service
 - Queensland Council of Social Service
 - St Vincent de Paul
 - Australian Red Cross
 - Local Government Association of Queensland
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The Department engaged with more than 600 people to inform the review, including government representatives, other jurisdictions, non-government organisations and members of the public.

- Volunteering Queensland
- Deaf Services Queensland
- National Retail Association
- Dr Rob Gordon, Clinical Psychologist specialising in disaster recovery
- Prof Kevin Ronan, Foundation Professor in Psychology and Chair in Clinical Psychology, CQ University Australia.

Members of the Public

- In collaboration with the Customer First Design Centre (Department of the Premier and Cabinet), 28 individuals who were impacted by TC Marcia were consulted one-on-one via phone and twelve participated in face-to-face interviews in Rockhampton.
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