



State Disaster Coordination Centre

Overview of Activities

July
to
December
2011





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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 on two occasions for natural disaster events that impacted Queensland during this period. These were for the Queensland Bushfires August to November 2011 and South Queensland Flooding November to December 2011.

There were no declarations of a Disaster Situation under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

Whilst the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) did not formally activate outside normal business hours during this period, the SDCC Watch Desk assisted in numerous minor operations that occurred state-wide.

There was one visit to the Port of Brisbane by a Nuclear Powered Warship from the United States Navy for crew rest and recreation.

STATE DISASTER COORDINATION CENTRE

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

Hendra Virus – July to September 2011

During the evening of 28 June 2011, the Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory reported a positive result for Hendra virus in blood samples from a horse on a farm near Beaudesert, south of Brisbane. Fourteen infected horses died or were euthanased across Queensland and a further nine in northern New South Wales. There were no confirmed human cases.

On 27 July, a pet kelpie dog living on infected premises at Mount Alford, south-west of Brisbane, tested positive to the disease. This was the first time Hendra virus had been found in a species other than a bat, horse or human, outside a controlled laboratory experiment.

Queensland Bushfires August to November 2011

High fuel loads from last year's floods together with low humidity, high temperatures and strong winds resulted in a busy bushfire season for almost the entire state during winter and autumn. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) utilised fixed and rotary wing aircraft for water bombing operations. During the peak of the event over 400 separate fires were burning across the state.

QFRS declared a state-wide Fire Danger Period from 4 September, 2011 to 1 January, 2012.

Tropical Cyclone Fina – December 2011

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Fina was Queensland's first tropical cyclone for the 2011/12 season. TC Fina developed over the northern Coral Sea, southeast of Papua New Guinea, on 18 December 2011 and then generally moved in a southerly direction over the next few days. TC Fina intensified into a Category 1 system in the early hours of 22 December 2011 about 1,110 kilometres east of Townsville, however, it was downgraded to a Tropical Low less than 12 hours later.

Whilst the system posed no threat to Queensland communities it did produce four metre swells and dangerous boating and swimming conditions for several days from Christmas Day along the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, which resulted in many beaches being closed to swimmers.



Tropical Cyclone Grant – December 2011

A tropical low formed within an active monsoon trough over the Arafura Sea, north of the Top End in the Northern Territory, on 21 December 2011. Over the next few days, the system intensified into Tropical Cyclone Grant and reached Category 2, before crossing the coast east of Croker Island on Christmas Day. TC Grant then weakened back to a Tropical Low and travelled towards the Gulf of Carpentaria, which it reached on 28 December.

Ex-TC Grant moved steadily east across the Gulf but failed to intensify back to a cyclone, it crossed the Cape York Peninsula, between Weipa and Aurukun on 30 December and then entered the Coral Sea near Coen later that day and continued its easterly movement, which took it away from the Queensland coastline.

No significant damage resulted, although there was localised flooding due to heavy rainfall from the system, numerous trees were also blown down.

South Queensland Flooding November to December 2011

Extreme rainfall from numerous severe thunderstorms throughout November and December resulted in widespread flooding across southern Queensland. One storm at Roma, on 7 December produced 85 mm rainfall in only 20 minutes.

Bureau of Meteorology

The State Disaster Coordination Centre 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 this period 1,768 weather advices were received from the Bureau. This included 545 warnings that required monitoring and notification to affected regions by the Watch Desk Officer. These warnings were mainly for phenomena such as Severe Thunderstorms, Flood, Severe Weather, and Tropical Cyclone.

Resupply Operations

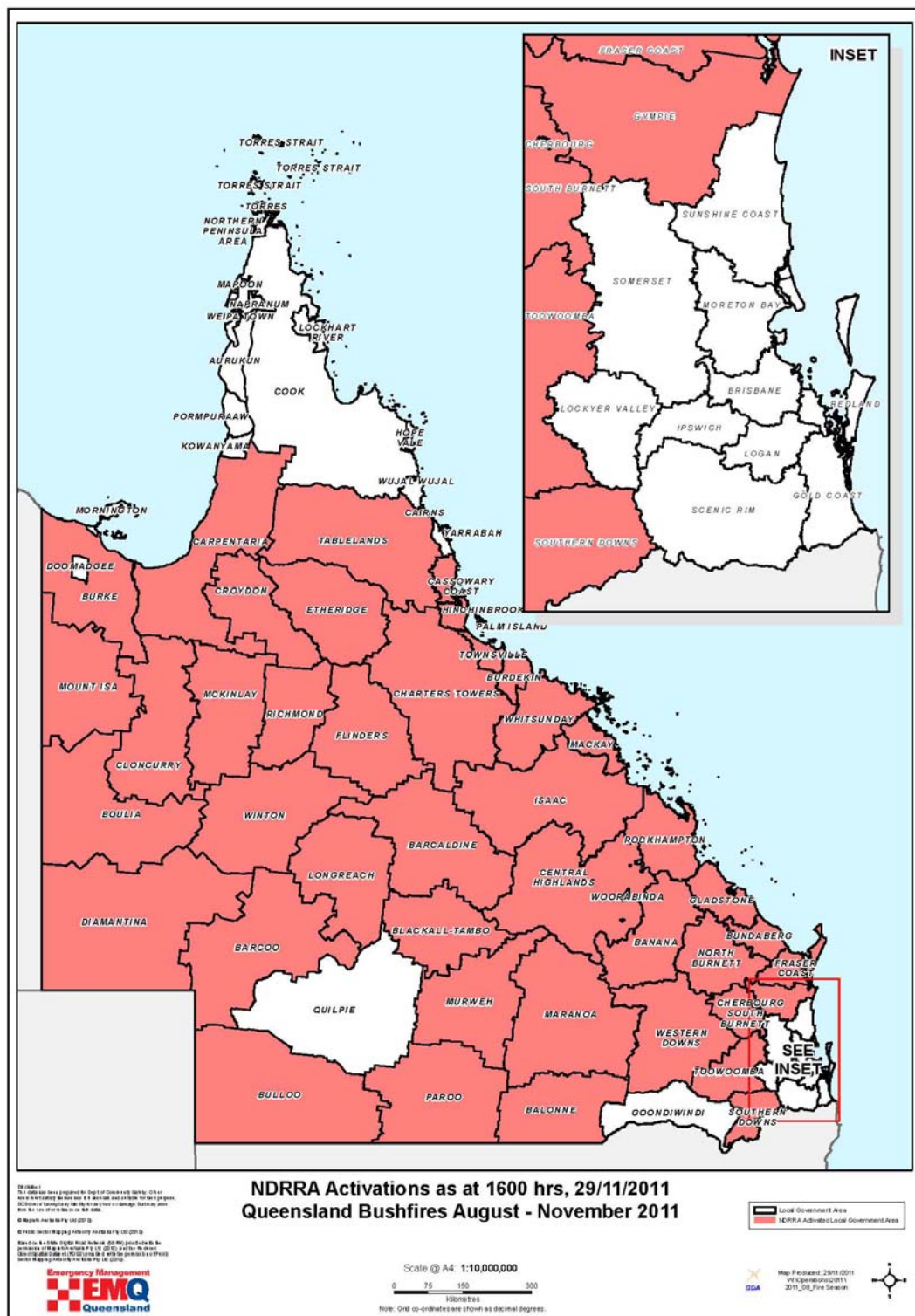
No resupply operations were undertaken during this period, as Queensland had not experienced sufficient rainfall this 'wet season' to isolate communities for an extended time.

DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

The Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services activated the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements on two occasions during this period, however, a number of Local Government areas were impacted by multiple events, particularly in north and western Queensland.

Queensland Bushfires August to November 2011

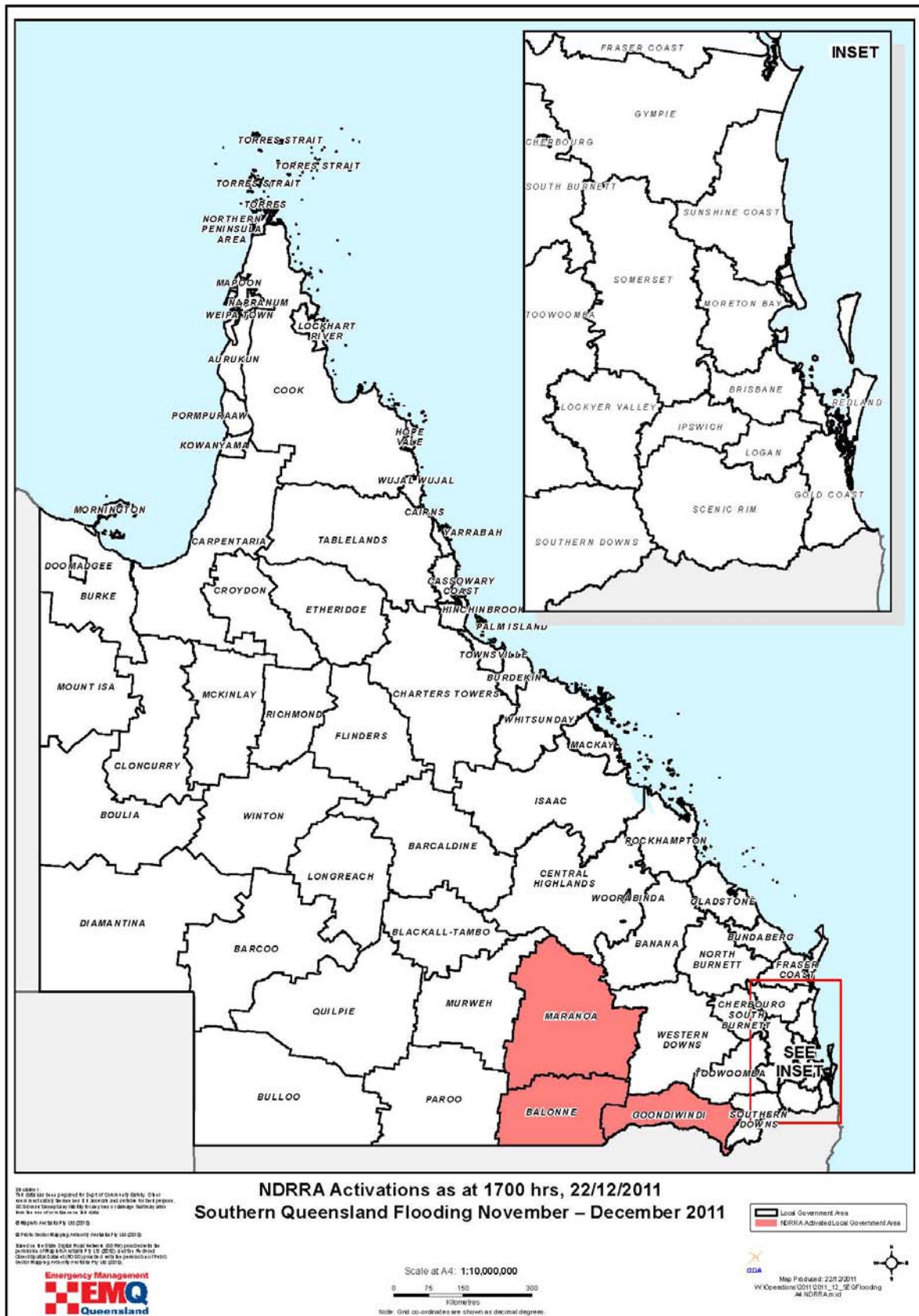
NDRRA relief measures were activated for Counter Disaster Operations, Concessional Loans to Primary Producers and Freight Subsidies for Primary Producers.





South Queensland Flooding November to December 2011

The Local Government Areas of Balonne, Goondiwindi and Maranoa Shire Councils were affected by severe rainfall and associated flooding that commenced in November 2011 and continued into December. NDRRA relief measures were activated the Restoration of Essential Public Assets.





NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP PROGRAM

During this period the USS Albuquerque, a Los Angeles class nuclear powered submarine visited Brisbane from 28 July to 2 August 2011, for crew rest and recreation purposes. The USS Albuquerque also surfaced for a short time on 19 July 2011 within southeast Queensland waters to rendezvous with another vessel for logistical support.

Exercise Mondegreen was conducted on 19 July 2011 and involved a multi-agency deployment and a headquarters exercise. The aim of the exercise was to test the communication processes associated with the emergency response arrangements

TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

The SDCC 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 maintain a surge capability during protracted operations, the SDCC conducted training for Department of Transport and Main Roads staff in July, which covered the functions and processes of the Logistics Cell.

Internal training was conducted for the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements, Resupply Operations, Emergency Alert and the systems and processes used within the SDCC.

Three staff attended a four day Coordinate Resources for a Multi-Agency Incident course conducted by the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI). Another staff member completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Exercise PacWave 11

The international Pacific Ocean 2011 tsunami warning exercise (PacWave 11) was conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System on 9 to 10 November. Australia and most Pacific Ocean countries participated in the exercise, which saw the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre (JATWC) issuing a combination of land and marine threats for the entire east coast of Australia. From a Queensland perspective, the exercise tested communication networks between the JATWC and the SDCC, as well as testing the SDCC responses and communication networks associated with tsunami threats.

Exercise Enduro

To ensure the new State Disaster Coordination Centre's operational readiness ahead of the 2011/2012 cyclone season, a combined SDCC and State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) functional exercise was conducted on 24 August 2011. Exercise Enduro was designed to:

- Assess the operational readiness of SDCC systems, technologies and procedures;
- Expose newly trained Whole of Government SDCC volunteers to a typical SDCC operational environment;
- Engage SDCG members to practice Whole of Government coordination systems;
- Evaluate operational interfaces between the SDCC and the SDCG; and
- Identify any operational performance gaps for resolution prior to a second SDCC/SDCG exercise.



ADF Disaster Management Exercise

To enable members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) gain a greater understanding of roles, responsibilities and relationships between key Queensland Disaster Management agencies and the ADF, a desktop exercise was held on 3 September 2011. The Exercise was designed to establish an understanding of Queensland's disaster management operations in order to improve interoperability, information sharing and consistent communications, as well as improve interoperability and understanding within local Defence Units of emergency management.

Exercise Enduro II

This exercise was conducted on 19 October 2011 and was a follow up to Exercise Enduro that was held in August 2011 and provides a unique opportunity for Whole-of-Government staff to practice the operational facilities and processes for the SDCC and SDCG in the new Disaster Management Centre. Exercise serials required SDCC staff and SDCG liaison officers to work through key considerations drawing upon the concepts and principles of disaster management to respond to the impact of an extreme weather event.



STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENTS

Emergency Alert

The Queensland Police Service and Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) conducted a joint Queensland review of Emergency Alert, and in consultation with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Local Government Association of Queensland, revised the guidelines and streamlined approval processes for issuing Emergency Alerts. The Director-General, Department of Community Safety approved the release of Version 3 of the Guidelines on 15 September 2011.

EMQ has developed a training package for the use of Emergency Alert, which is aimed at Local and District Disaster Management Groups.

Disaster Readiness Amendment Act 2011

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry released its Interim Report on 1 August 2011. The Report contained a range of recommendations directed at all levels of Government. A number of recommendations relevant to the State required existing legislation to be amended to effect implementation. Consequently, the *Disaster Readiness Amendment Act 2011* was developed and commenced on 28 October 2011, it amends the *Disaster Management Act 2003* to:

- allow a representative from the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Red Cross Society, Surf Life Saving Queensland and the Bureau of Meteorology to be appointed as members of the State Disaster Management Group.
- require the chairperson of a disaster management group to consult with an essential services provider if the group considers the provider of the essential services can help the group perform its functions.
- clarify that local disaster management plans are to be regularly reviewed and assessed by the District Disaster Management Group.
- provide for the publication of the various disaster management plans on the following websites:
 - o the State plan on the Department of Community Safety's website;
 - o district plans on the Queensland Police Service website; and
 - o local plans of the relevant local government website.
- allow the Premier and the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services to extend a disaster situation for a period of seven days without regulation, if it is not practicable to make a regulation extending the existing disaster declaration.

Committee Contribution

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

- Brisbane Port Safety Organisation
- Emergency Alert Steering Committee
- Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires
- Location Based System Steering Committee
- National Emergency Management Committee
- Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee
- Queensland Counter Terrorism Strategy Working Group
- Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee
- Senior Executive Management Team
- State Disaster Coordination Group
- State Disaster Management Group
- Technical Working Group of the Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear)



Official Visits

Disaster Operations hosted official tours of the State Disaster Coordination Centre and gave presentations to the following agencies.

- 70 delegates from the 5th Australasian Natural Hazards Management Conference
- Auckland City Council Disaster management Study Group
- Australian Defence Force
- Australian Emergency Management Institute
- Biosecurity Queensland
- Chinese Delegation – Politics and Law Committee
- Chinese Delegation – Qingdao Province
- Chinese Delegation – Qinghai Province
- Department of Communities
- Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Emergency Management Queensland
- Energex
- Hinchinbrook Council
- Kenya Climate Adaption Program
- Logan District Disaster Management Group
- Los Angeles Alliance Group
- National Security College
- New Zealand Civil Defence
- New Zealand High Commissioner
- New Zealand Police
- Pacific Parliaments Delegation
- Queensland Ambulance Service
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
- Queensland Police Service
- Seismic Monitoring Group
- Sri Lanka Ministry of Disaster Management
- State Emergency Service
- Western Australia Department of Corrections