



# Disaster Operations

## Overview of Activities

January  
to  
June  
2011





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Due to extensive flooding throughout Queensland in late 2010, six Disaster Situations under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* remained current for the districts of Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Longreach, Dalby, and Roma. As major flooding spread across the State, the Premier and the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services declared a state level declaration on 11 January 2011 for the districts of Brisbane, Bundaberg, Dalby, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Gympie, Ipswich, Logan, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Roma, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Warwick and Redcliffe.

As a result of the heavy and widespread rain associated with Tropical Cyclones (TC) Anthony and Yasi, another state level declaration was made for the districts of Cairns, Mareeba, Innisfail, Mackay, Rockhampton, Longreach, Mt Isa, Gladstone and Townsville.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) was activated on 24 December 2010 to support operations relating to Queensland Flooding and TC Tasha, which continued into mid February. There were four other occasions where the SDCC was activated outside normal business hours to support operations relating to TC Anthony, TC Yasi, activation of the Commonwealth Reception plan due to the Christchurch earthquake and flooding in the Maranoa area.

The SDCC coordinated 23 resupply operations which resulted in over 105 tonnes of essential supplies being airlifted to isolated communities. 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 72 Emergency Alert campaigns to communities that were affected by floods or cyclones.

There was one visit to Brisbane by Nuclear Powered Warships 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:

### **Queensland Flooding and Tropical Cyclone Tasha, November 2010 – February 2011**

Late November and December 2010 saw record high levels of rainfall resulting in widespread flooding on many rivers. Additionally, a tropical low in the northern Coral Sea intensified into Tropical Cyclone Tasha and crossed the North Tropical Coast early on Christmas Day. While Tasha remained as a Category 1 cyclone for only a matter of hours, widespread heavy rainfall of 150-200mm was experienced on the southern side of the system as it moved onto the coast.

Intense rainfall fell around Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley generating a flash flood event. Toowoomba, the Lockyer Valley, Grantham and Helidon were severely impacted. Heavy rainfall continued to occur in the south east, generating widespread flooding around Ipswich and Brisbane from the 12th of January. This was the largest flood event to impact the region since 1974.

Emergency Alert SMS and voice message advice/warnings were sent to flooded communities 21 times from 1 to 14 January 2011.

### **Tropical Cyclone Anthony, January – February 2011**

On 30 January 2011, Tropical Cyclone Anthony crossed the Queensland coast near Bowen as a Category 2 system. On 31 January 2011, Anthony weakened to a tropical low heading steadily to the southwest.

Heavy rainfall occurred over the central coast, northern central highlands and coalfields district as a result of this system, contributing to the severe flooding already occurring across the state.

### **Tropical Cyclone Yasi, February 2011**

Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi developed as a tropical low northwest of Fiji on 29 January 2011 and commenced tracking westward. The system quickly intensified to a cyclone and was named Yasi on 30 January. TC Yasi continued to intensify as it maintained its west to southwest movement, by 2 February 2011 Yasi was a marginal Category 5 cyclone and accelerating towards the coast of Queensland.

Yasi crossed the east Queensland coast near Mission Beach between midnight and 1am on 3 February 2011. At the time of writing this report it was not possible to confirm that Yasi was a Category 5 cyclone when it crossed the coast, although two nearby instruments recorded minimum pressures of 929 and 930 hectopascals, which suggest wind gusts of about 285 kilometres per hour were possible. Although the tide was falling when Yasi crossed the coast, Cardwell recorded 2.3 metres above Highest Astronomical Tide due to the storm tide. Extensive damage to property was reported, particularly in Cardwell, Mission Beach, Tully and Tully Heads.

Yasi was one of the most powerful cyclones to affect Queensland since records began. A strong and large system, Yasi maintained its core and continued inland, tracking southwest before finally weakening to a tropical low near Mount Isa around 10am 3 February 2011.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was activated for this event from 31 January 2011 to 17 February 2011. Emergency Alert was used 48 times to deliver 16 separate warnings for the period 31 January to 6 February 2011.



### **Flash Flooding, March 2011**

Emergency Alert was used once during the early morning of 7 March 2011 for residents in the Mareeba, Bibbohra and Bilwon areas, to deliver a warning message of localised flooding and flash flooding due to rapid river rises in the Barron River.

### **Christchurch Earthquake, February 2011**

On 22 February 2011, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck New Zealand near the city of Christchurch, causing widespread damage and significant loss of life.

Australia deployed three military aircraft to New Zealand with personnel, equipment and supplies. These aircraft were used to repatriate Australian citizens from the disaster area. On 23 February 2011, the Australian Government activated the Commonwealth Reception Plan and Queensland activated the QRECEPLAN.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was not activated during this time but coordinated the communications between Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) and the Crisis Coordination Centre.

### **Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, March 2011**

A magnitude 9.0 offshore earthquake occurred 130km east of Sendai, Japan, on 11 March 2011 at a depth of 50km. This triggered a massive tsunami that devastated the eastern coast of Japan, particularly the Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures on the main island of Honshu.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was not activated for this event, but coordinated deployment requests from the Commonwealth for QFRS Urban Search and Rescue teams.

### **Maranoa Flooding, April 2011**

Significant rainfall totals of up to 114mm were recorded in the Bungil Creek catchment resulting in flooding in the Roma Township. The predicted peak of 8.1m at Bungil Creek saw two emergency alert campaigns issued and council door knocking advising residents to self-evacuate.

On 19 April 2011, a disaster situation was declared. State Emergency Service crews and boats from around Queensland were deployed to the Township. The disaster situation ended on 27 April 2011.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was activated from 19 to 27 April 2011.

Emergency Alert was used twice on 19 April 2011 to deliver warnings aimed at residents in low lying areas.

### **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 January to June 2011, 2,346 weather advices were received from the Bureau. 483 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 1,863 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

The La Nina conditions which started in late 2010 resulted in above average rainfall conditions across the state and the monsoon trough was very active for most of the wet season. This resulted in widespread road closures as floodwaters isolated communities and properties.

There were 23 state level resupply operations coordinated by the State Disaster Coordination Centre and the total movement of supplies was over 105 tonnes. Some communities required multiple resupplies due to long periods of isolation caused by road closures due to flooding. Additionally, a number of Local Governments conducted their own operations which were typically by light aircraft or mustering helicopters to isolated homesteads in their area.

### State Level Resupply Operations:

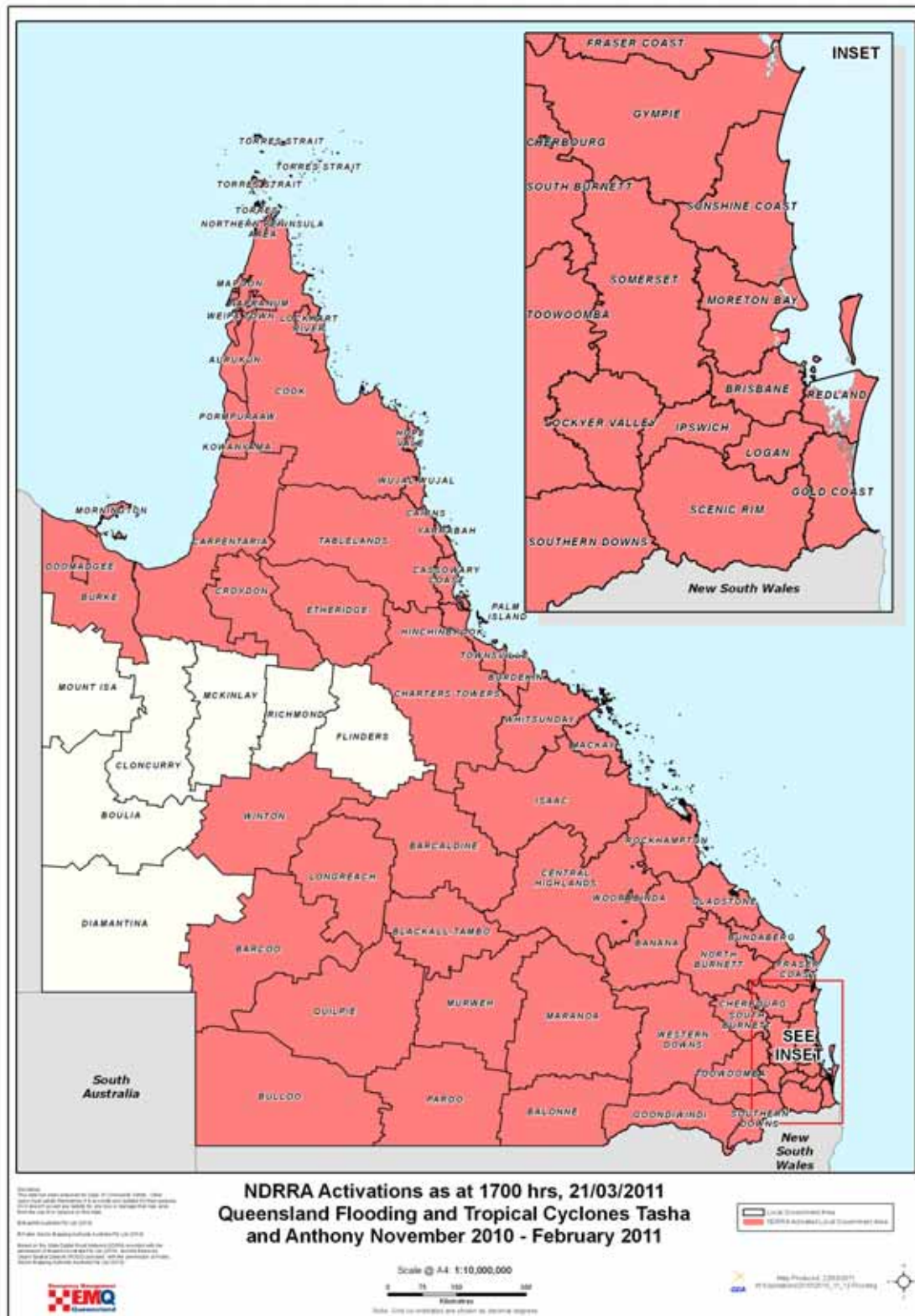
| Date     | Destination   | Cargo           | Method        | Kilograms      |
|----------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 30/12/10 | Springsure    | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 7,459          |
| 30/12/10 | Blackwater    | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 6,341          |
| 31/12/10 | Roma          | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 14,930         |
| 31/12/10 | Emerald       | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 18,000         |
| 1/1/11   | Emerald       | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 350            |
| 1/1/11   | Blackwater    | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 10,800         |
| 4/1/11   | Emerald       | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 6,780          |
| 14/1/11  | Coen          | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 3,500          |
| 21/1/11  | Coen          | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 3,315          |
| 9/2/11   | Springsure    | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 1,350          |
| 10/2/11  | Burketown     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 2,825          |
| 16/2/11  | Doomadgee     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 1,740          |
| 17/2/11  | Coen          | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 2,860          |
| 8/3/11   | Bedourie      | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 2,700          |
| 8/3/11   | Burketown     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 3,592          |
| 8/3/11   | Doomadgee     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 1,665          |
| 9/3/11   | Coen          | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 3,440          |
| 16/3/11  | Gregory Downs | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 1,430          |
| 16/3/11  | Burketown     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 1,700          |
| 23/3/11  | Doomadgee     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 1,670          |
| 28/3/11  | Burketown     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 5,290          |
| 31/3/11  | Coen          | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 3,312          |
| 31/3/11  | Doomadgee     | Essential foods | Fixed Wing    | 560            |
|          |               |                 | <b>Total:</b> | <b>105,609</b> |



## DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

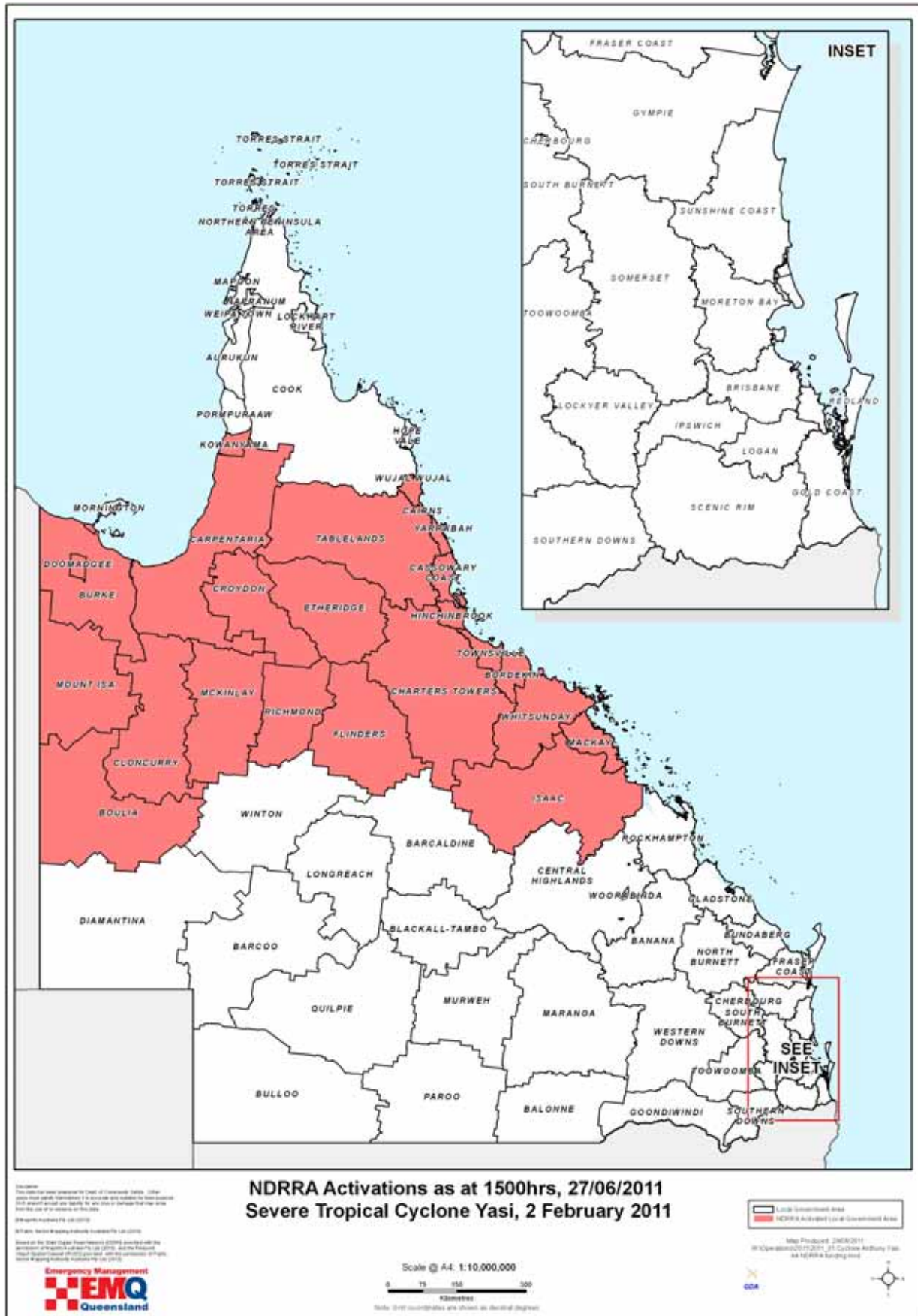
The Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services activated the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements on three occasions during this period, however, a number of Local Government areas were impacted by multiple events, particularly in north and western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

### Queensland Flooding and Tropical Cyclones Tasha and Anthony



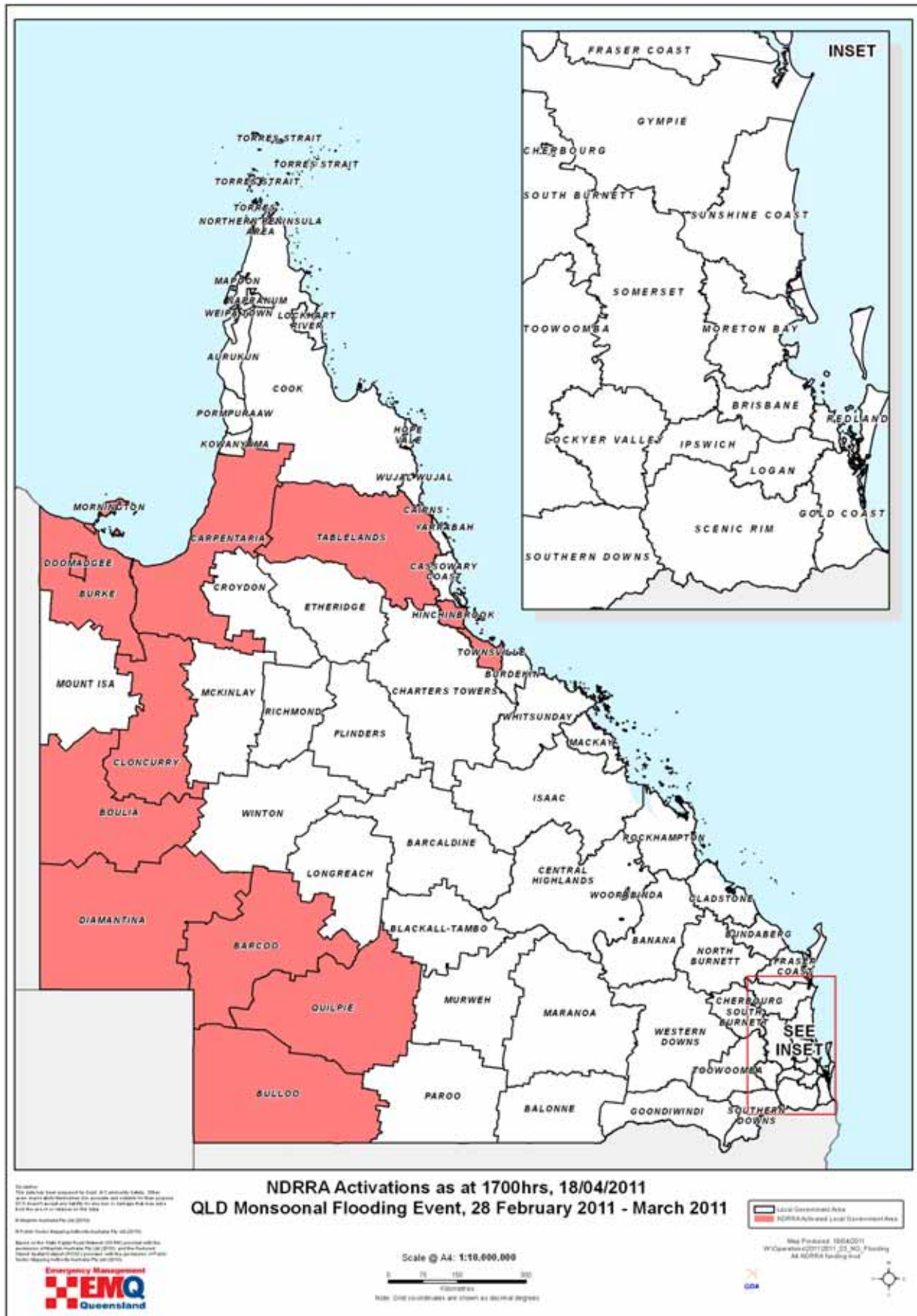


## Tropical Cyclone Yasi





## Queensland Monsoonal Flooding



## **NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP PROGRAM**

The Disaster Operations Unit is the lead agency for coordinating Nuclear Powered Warship (NPW) visits to Queensland ports. During this period the USS City of Corpus Christi, a Los Angeles class submarine visited Brisbane from 14-20 April 2011, for crew rest and recreation purposes.

Exercise Fisherman 2011 was conducted on 30 May 2011 and involved a multi-agency full field deployment and a headquarters exercise. The aim of the exercise was to test the initial response procedures of the Brisbane Port Safety Plan as well as testing the screening/decontamination of evacuees. The Gladstone Port Safety Plan was exercised on 31 May 2011 by conducting a discussion exercise.

The Technical Working Group \*(TWG) of the Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear) is an Australian Government Interdepartmental Committee, which is responsible for assessing alongside berths and anchorages as suitable for use by visiting NPW. The TWG has recommended the re-validation of the ports of Brisbane and Gladstone following an inspection of the facilities and meetings with the Brisbane and Gladstone Port Safety Organisations in May and June 2011.

## **TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACTIVITIES**

The SDCC maintains an active role in organising and conducting disaster management activities at a State level. However, most training and exercises are conducted later in the year when the cyclone season has finished.

### **State Disaster Coordination Centre Training**

To provide a surge capability during protracted operations, the SDCC has been conducting regular training sessions for EMQ and Whole of Government (WoG) staff who are interested in assisting the SDCC during operational periods. Operational training was provided to 69 staff from a number of different Queensland Government departments.

Additional Watch Desk staff were also trained in the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements and the systems and processes used within the SDCC.

### **Exercise Tempest**

Exercise Tempest was conducted on 24 April 2011 and involved 62 participants mainly from Whole of Government. The exercise focussed on the roles, responsibilities and functions of the Operations, Planning, Logistics and Intelligence cells used within the SDCC during operations.



## **STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENTS**

### **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. The extended activation of the SDCC due to widespread flooding across the State and cyclonic activity in the Far North delayed the move of the SDCC to the Disaster Management Centre in the QEOC until April 2011.

The SDCC Watch Desk capability was greatly expanded in May due to additional staff being recruited. This now allows for a centralised and streamlined process for the allocation of requests for assistance to the State Emergency Service (SES).

### **Workshop and Conference Contribution**

Disaster Operations staff actively participated in the following activities:

- Disaster Management for Local Government Conference – Bundaberg

### **Committee Contribution**

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

- Brisbane Port Safety Organisation
- Communication and Information Committee
- Community Resilience Steering Group
- Emergency Alert Steering Committee
- Gladstone Port Safety Organisation
- Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires
- Location Based System Steering Committee
- National Emergency Management Committee
- Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee
- Public Safety Communications Steering Committee
- Queensland Counter Terrorism Strategy Working Group
- Queensland Emergency Operations Centre Project Control Group
- Queensland Flood Warning Consultative Committee
- 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)
- 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.

- Taipei Economic and Cultural Office
- Singaporean Government Delegation
- The World Bank
- Delegation from Louisiana
- Queensland Police Service
- Victorian Police Service
- Architects Australia
- Royal Australian Air Force
- Queensland Gas Company
- Australian Federal Police
- Australian Defence Force
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Mayor Hinchinbrook Shire Council
- Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
- Queensland Rail
- United Nations delegation
- Hong Kong delegation
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
- Los Angeles Alliance Group
- Federal Parliamentary Representatives
- Department of Corrections Western Australia
- 5th Australasian Natural Hazards Management Conference
- Biosecurity Queensland
- Pacific Parliaments Delegation
- Logan Local Disaster Management Group
- Seismic Monitoring Group