

APPENDIX 1

Consultation Summary

The Queensland floods and the community sector: contribution, challenges and lessons for the future

April 2011

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The Queensland floods and the community sector: contribution, challenges and lessons for the future

Between December 2010 and March 2011 Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) engaged with our members to gather information on the impact of the Queensland floods on the community sector, the sector's service users and the general community. QCOSS used a combination of methods to gather this data including regional visits, an online survey and informal interviews.

QCOSS visited 15 regions and gained information from 36 organisations throughout Queensland during the post-flood period. Additionally, QCOSS gathered phone and online survey responses from 20 organisations in flood affected areas.

This summary presents collated information on the impact of the floods on the community services sector, as well as verbatim responses gathered under broad themes. This information is for other organisations to use in framing their own submissions as well as for ongoing advocacy on specific issues identified in the response and recovery. The information in this summary does not necessarily represent the views of QCOSS.

A summary of the organisations visited and surveyed by region is attached (see attachment 1). A copy of the survey and the flood response framework are also attached (see attachment 2 and 3 respectively).

Impact of the Floods on the Community Services Sector

Timeframe

QCOSS' consultation process spanned the peak of the Queensland floods and was completed early March 2011. Respondents provided feedback all throughout this period and as such the information that was provided might reflect varying phases in the disaster recovery process.

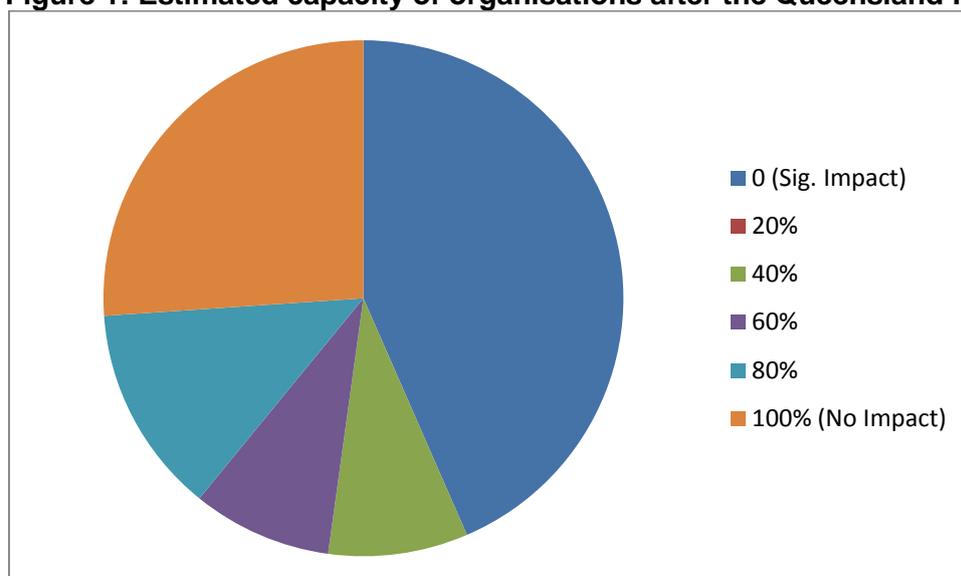
Organisations' operational capacity

Most services indicated that they could not operate for 2 to 5 days during and immediately following the floods. This was mostly associated with staff members' inability to get to work due to flooding.

In cases where organisations' premises had been inundated by flood water, organisations were still operating below capacity, due to lack of premises and equipment and redirection of service capacity. In most cases organisations had not received funding to cover relocation expenses.

QCOSS gathered data to assess the impact that the floods had on organisations' capacity. Figure one illustrates the impact of the floods on capacity during the peak and immediate aftermath of the floods. Some organisations have indicated that capacity has improved or returned to normal since this time.

Figure 1: Estimated capacity of organisations after the Queensland Floods



One service explained the impact of the floods on their service, staff and clients:

A number of disability clients had to be co-housed in one area, no meals on wheels, no pharmaceutical deliveries, all specialist and medical appointments in Brisbane were cancelled, all transport was affected over 10 days in the Sunshine Coast and Wide Bay area. A lot of flooding in low-SES areas and some workers stuck at clients' houses, especially those needing 24 hour care - workers couldn't leave the person so in some cases were with them for up to 3 days. As a result other workers were on call for 2 weeks straight. Webster packs couldn't be delivered; pharmacists had to come up with other measures - longer term question on who coordinates when the pharmacy goes under. Services are the last line of support for many people and were left to pick up the load and meet all and any gaps.

Organisations formally involved in the recovery process were present at evacuation centres 24 hours per day until closure on Wednesday 19 January. Micah Projects Inc, an organisation funded to respond to homelessness and people at risk of homelessness, extended the hours of operation of their 'Street to Home' service to meet increasing demand for homelessness services.

Organisations that were not in flood affected areas were also affected by the floods:

The biggest impact I'm aware of so far is that many Gold Coast organisations have head offices in Brisbane. Servers went down and emails they thought they were sending and receiving didn't happen, also I've had a request for an extension about some reporting because the finance area for the agency is in Brisbane and they can't get the info on time.

Damage to organisations' properties as a result of the floods

Several organisations cited significant financial losses and a major impact on their capacity due to the direct impacts of the floods. Organisations have relocated to less suitable premises and are experiencing delays and uncertainty waiting for repairs and maintenance and/or negotiations with insurance providers and landlords.

Organisations reported many different types of property damage including:

- Carpets being wet and probably needs replacing.
- We had leaks from some parts of the roof.
- Some leaking but no inundation in our office.
- Properties/loss of power
- Significant impacts in relation to the relocation of services, for example, a home assistance service in Brisbane, which provides information and referrals predominately by phone, has gone from having 10 phone lines to 1. This service has also experienced increased demand due to clients relocating.
- Centacare staff, clients and offices were heavily affected, especially the ones in the Rocklea, Tennyson, Sherwood, Graceville areas. Some Centacare offices have nothing left (some managed to get their servers out in time but that was all). Some were able to re-establish in their office, some couldn't and need to relocate to other premises. All offices need to get up and running again as they have clients dependent on them for services. Insurance claims are taking a while due to the sheer volume of claims, and new equipment may be difficult to locate in the short term.

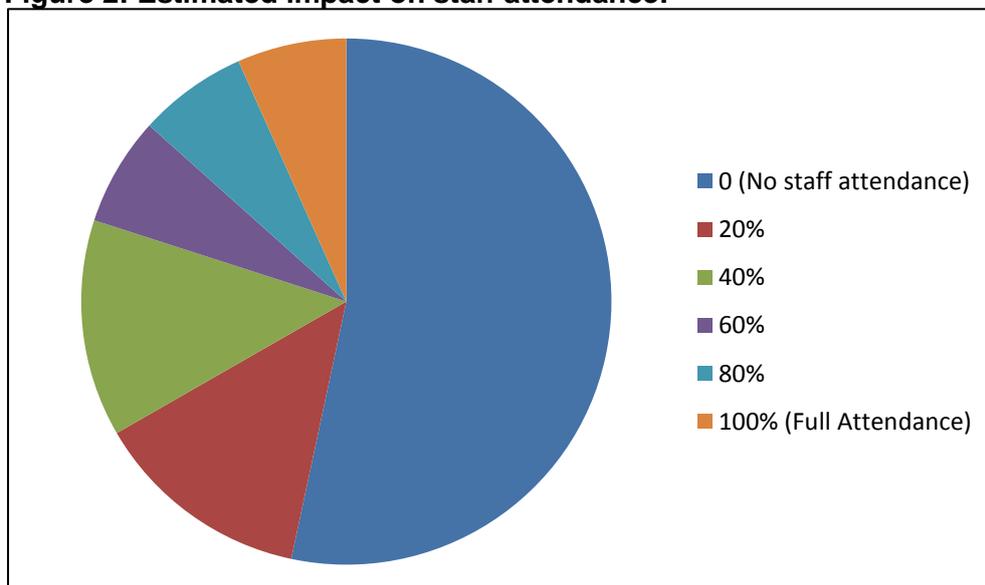
Staff rates of attendance during the floods

The majority of responses indicated that staff were unable to attend work on the 11th and 12th of January at the peak of the floods.

One organisation in Rockhampton received several staff resignations due to the personal impacts of floods. These workers partners were unable to obtain work due to the impact of flooding on their employers and the family relocated to find work.

The data presented in Figure 2 illustrates the impact on staff attendance experienced by organisations during the peak and immediate aftermath of the floods. Some organisations have indicated that staff attendance has improved since this time.

Figure 2: Estimated impact on staff attendance:



Use of organisations' facilities in community recovery

53% of respondent organisations' facilities were being used for community recovery.

Facilities were used in a number of ways including:

- Accommodation for people with disabilities due to staff shortages.
- Spare office space for other organisations affected by water damage.

- Space used for collection and distribution points for food, clothes, furniture, food vouchers.
- Office used for help with forms and information, Centrelink Agency Flood Assistance, ER, Formal Recovery Team, Relief (donation) Centres, community recovery, applications for flood relief.
- Meeting space for flood appeal planning and event.
- Space for people who have experienced the trauma to meet and seek services.

Non-core business services delivered by organisations

69% of the organisations surveyed were delivering services outside their core business.

The types of services organisations were providing included:

- Collecting and distributing goods for flood victims.
- Sharing space with other organisations due to offices being inundated with water and inoperable.
- Fundraising for flood victims.
- Emergency support as required, financial assistance.
- Disseminating community safety info.
- Family Intervention services.
- Volunteering: practical assistance to flood victims and cleaning up areas and houses.
- Seconding staff to Community Recovery Centres.
- Flood Legal Help from Queensland Community Legal Centres.
- Professional supervision and debriefing services for other workers in the sector – particularly in government departments.
- Provision of additional transport to support clients to access medication and essentials from alternate areas.

This additional service provision was consuming between 50 – 100% of staff resources. The average percentage of staff resources dedicated to the provision of additional flood related service was 70%.

Most organisations were providing these additional services from existing staff resources and did not receive funding to provide these additional services. Some Department of Communities funded agencies that were formally involved in Recovery Centres have been able to invoice the Department for costs estimated around \$30,000. However, others who did not have a formal role were not offered this support.

Select organisations were provided brokerage funds from the Department of Communities to deliver services beyond their usual service capacity. For example, Micah Projects Inc was provided \$140,000 of funds to meet increasing service demands. The organisation also needed an additional \$6479 in private donations to cover the extremely high call for services.

For some organisations the immediate need to provide additional services lasted less than two weeks, but many organisations cited that the increased level of demand would last indefinitely or was predicted to peak in the coming months.

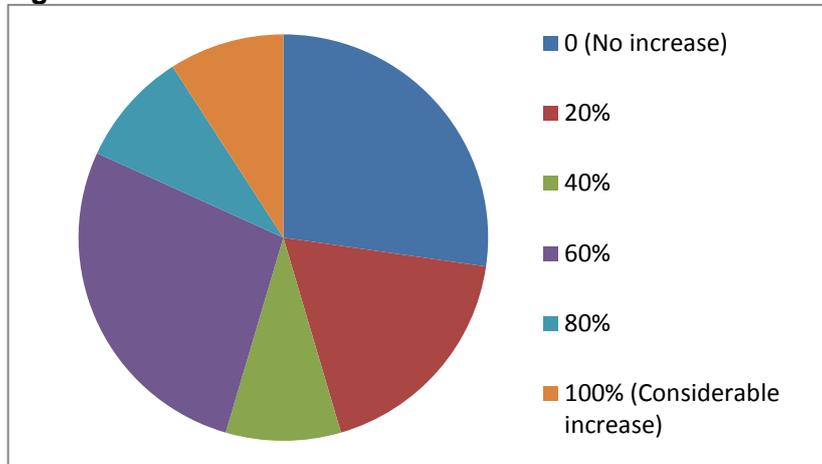
Below is one example of the impact these extra activities are having on organisations:

Meetings with Department of Communities have increased significantly, phone contacts, emails etc are all taking resources to maintain communication.

Increase in demand for core services

Organisations that completed the survey reported an average 30% increase in demand for core services. A breakdown of the responses is illustrated below (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Estimated increase in demand for core services:



Organisations gave examples of the increases in demand that they had experienced. Their responses are outlined below:

- Some services related their increased demand for emergency relief to casual workers inability to work due to floods rather than the direct impacts of the floods. This was noticed even before the floods as many people did not work due to rain.
- Services in the Gold Coast were expecting flow on effects from the flooding in Brisbane.
- A Gold Coast service anticipated that demand for financial counselling will increase substantially as the full financial repercussions emerge.
- A lot of extra demands due to overcrowding, as displaced people are staying with friends and family in our area. Many people have requested Emergency Relief (which we are not funded to provide, although we do collect and distribute donations) and help sourcing additional housing. (Caboolture)
- Overall, the neighbourhood centre received 132 referrals in January and had an additional 62 individuals/families access emergency relief. This is triple the demand this service usually receives, and the majority of these referrals came from the recovery centre. (Brisbane)
- Many of our Gold Coast sites have had lots of applications for AGDRP assistance [the federal government financial assistance package] as people have been stranded and unable to get home (both north and south). Many have come in to ask for assistance with housing - and are having to utilise the funds we have paid them (if qualified) to pay for extra accommodation until roads clear etc. (Centrelink)
- Following the closure of the Evacuation Centre on 19 January it became evident that a large number of people would need support to relocate from the temporary accommodation found as a result of evacuation to either their own homes, when safe to return, or stable long-term housing. (Micah Projects Inc)

Impact on local community members and their needs

Many organisations noted the psychological effect of the floods on local community members and the impacts on the community, especially in terms of domestic and family violence and relationship breakdowns. This in turn was compounding the accommodation shortage, as those displaced by the floods searched for suitable accommodation.

Some comments received from community organisations reflected the psychological impact of the floods including:

- Families are experiencing loss and dislocation as they are unable to return to their homes.
- There has been a dramatic impact on the relationships in the lives of those who have been flood affected (e.g. relationships already under stress have been pushed to breaking point - the impact of these relationships breaking down in temporary 'couch surfing' arrangements will have a dramatic impact on demand for housing).
- The services in Emerald reported anecdotal significant increases in alcohol related problems and domestic violence. Queensland Health have collated data on the increase in presentations to their services. (Emerald)
- We anticipate an increase in family violence, mental health and child protection issues in the next few weeks as a result of overcrowding as displaced people are staying with friends and family in our area (Caboolture).
- Through Queensland Health staff have been offered a Psychological Trauma Team from Peter Austin Victoria to come to the region for a two week period and provide Psychological First Aid sessions to individuals in need. The group had co-ordinated and promoted a program of times through all services for this two week period which was fully booked. Unfortunately this resource was withdrawn and reallocated to other events. The group was incredibly disappointed and discussed the significant need in this area and the gap this presented. (Emerald)
- Increased number of parents accessing centre (which provides children's programmes) about changes in child's behaviour as a result of family stress or association with event. (Ipswich and Goodna)
- Increase in domestic violence incidents with clients as partners have re-entered domestic relationships due to loss of previous accommodation and general stressors. (Ipswich and Goodna)

Services also noted the economic impact of the floods, both directly on members of the community and on local businesses, which in turn was affecting unemployment levels.

- Businesses have been badly affected – impact on unemployment rates. (Bundaberg)
- Impact of floods on the mines, and the economic impact on the community and businesses that support the mines. (Rockhampton)
- One service noted panic buying in fuel and groceries, and was concerned that this might lead to shortages which increase prices. This was exacerbated by the flooding interstate and transport difficulties associated with the flooding. Prices are already increasing and will continue to increase over the coming months due to the flood damage to crops in Queensland. (Gold Coast)
- Emerald is in a fairly unique position due to the extensive mining industry in the Region. As a result Emerald presents an interesting sociological and community profile where the fly in fly out (FIFO) mentality creates a transient, somewhat disengaged cohort of residents, however the spoils of the resources boom provides significant financial resources and investment in the Region. Further, the flow on pressures on accommodation and other in-demand community resources has meant that commodities such as housing and basic food items have become prohibitive in cost for many residents which have been considerably compounded by the recent flood events. (Emerald)
- There was a consistent sense, which was also supported in the individual meetings, that community members were reluctant to access the grants and supports available considering themselves not worthy. This was strongly supported by all organisations present and the meeting then focused on how to manage this situation. (Emerald)

Impact on housing and homelessness

Organisations noted an impact on housing and homelessness and expected this to increase over the coming months. Several factors contributed to this problem, including:

- Damage to public and social housing stock.
- Many displaced people were either not able to travel to their usual home, and some were unable to return to their usual residence because it had been flood affected.
- Relationship breakdown due to the stress of the flood situation.

Examples of responses from the sector included:

- Couple of minor water ingress into yards and a few roof leaks in our managed properties. All managed normally.
- No damage to any of our properties. Some difficulties keeping up with grass mowing and with mould growing on walls and carpets.
- One property with water through it - now cleaned up. Tenants remain in the property as damage was minimal. An 8 unit property also had water through the four ground floor units, one was vacant - damage is covered under insurance. We have relocated affected tenants to other stock.
- Properties/loss of power.
- A home assistance service in Brisbane, which provides information and referrals predominately by phone, has experienced increased demand due to clients relocating.
- Centacare staff, clients and offices have been savagely impacted, especially the ones in the Rocklea, Tennyson, Sherwood, Graceville areas.
- Some services anticipated increased demand for affordable rental accommodation, which was already in short supply, potentially driving up rental prices.
- Homeowners not insured and could not afford immediate repairs to make homes habitable. (Bundaberg)
- Home and yacht owners waiting for insurance needed short term assistance. (Bundaberg)
- Tenants whose landlords were not prepared to undertake repairs, or where this would take some months. (Bundaberg)
- Travelling families stranded in Bundaberg, roads cut and run out of personal funds on hotel accommodation. (Bundaberg)
- Rental increases have started to occur in Ipswich and Goodna. (Ipswich and Goodna)
- Rental market for young people will become increasingly challenging (beyond normal). (Ipswich and Goodna)
- The demand for private rental will increase as will prices and this will increase costs for our privately rented stock. Sourcing stock will become more difficult and unscrupulous landlords will have a field day. The people who were homeless before the floods when we weren't able to meet demand are no less homeless because a lot of other people are now homeless too. I'm concerned that flood displaced homeless people will now be considered higher priority than those already in the system, and so there will be a reduction in services to that client group who may have been homeless for months or years.
- Following the Brisbane floods in January, Project Exit was established by the Department of Communities to re-house people who had no other immediate housing options following the disaster. The Department of Communities engaged Micah Projects to work collaboratively on this project. (Micah Projects)

Impact on disadvantaged and at-risk individuals in the local community

During QCOSs' consultation process, services reported the following impacts on disadvantaged and at risk individuals in the community:

- Increased presentations at court due to repairs and cleaning requests from landlords. (Ipswich and Goodna)

- Demographically tenants have lower personal insurance levels than average population – loss of personal items particularly impacted this group.
- Increased number of people living in rental situations now requiring support.
- Transport issues: increased challenges with ease of access to medication support. Loss of local employment and capacity to retain distant employment due to increased transport challenges as accommodation closest to public transport links most affected.
- Isolation of newly arrived people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities was raised as an issue. Although warning messages reached the ears of newly arrived communities, some did not take the message seriously because they had little understanding about floods. It seemed people were unable to grasp the danger of flood as they believed that Australia is a safe haven. Many of our clients were not in touch with other service providers (or were not as familiar with other service providers they have accessed) so for many of them our service became their first point of contact during the floods - we had to refer people to other areas for help where we could not assist.
- A large number of people from parts of Brisbane and from Toowoomba are currently staying with families and friends within the indigenous community in Deception Bay. Nobody wants to ask for help in case it affects their social housing tenancy, Centrelink payments or child protection agreements. At our Interim Steering Group Meeting yesterday we were able to get assurances from the Housing Service Centre Manager that nobody would face higher rents or other (housing related) action as a result of this, and that, in fact, he would attempt to provide additional housing to ease overcrowding.
- At the evacuation sites, services were not put in place for people needing personal care or assistance. Some individuals were turned away because they could not be supported at the evacuation centres – Centacare staff that were sent home could actually have been sent to evacuation centres to support those people.
- Worried about the long term affects of displaced people and needing to spread the already meagre resources in our community even further.
- No loss of life however a lot of older people lost everything including their homes, all they had ever worked for.
- Concerns that tenancies for youth will be even more difficult to obtain.
- Impact on individuals in detox and rehab receiving \$1,000 flood payment has meant that many of them went on a 5 day bender and derailed their recovery.
- DV Connect staffing issues, local domestic violence service flooded, no crisis accommodation.
- Youth evacuees with no guardian refused entry to evacuation centres.
- Mental health patients care plans failed - lack of available staff, limited number of counselling services for medium term, long term clientele. Crisis staffing now being provided for short term.

Positive feedback, stories, and responses

- Department of Communities had called community funded agencies to see if they had been damaged and any effects on service delivery. The Government Coordinator asked me if I had heard about NGO's suffering flooding. (Gold Coast)
- Emerald experienced flooding in 2008 and in the most recent event in December 2010. Due to the frequency of events, the Region established the Central Highlands Regional Council Recovery Coordination Group (CHRCRCG) which consists of an overarching group and four sub committees:
 - Community Support, Health and Wellbeing
 - Economic Recovery and Employment
 - Roads, Transport and Infrastructure
 - Environment

The sub committees of this group meet three monthly during non active times and ramp up to daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly depending on the phasing of the event. The

Community Support, Health and Wellbeing sub committee has broad representation from the Government, health and community sectors. As a result Emerald has a well established, coordinated and resourced response to disaster management regionally. (Emerald)

- Two staff here til 9.30pm one day faxing Centrelink claim forms - because Centrelink didn't deem it important enough to send their staff here. (Lockyer Valley)
- Most Community Recovery happened by 'outreach', whereby DoCs staff drove to flood affected areas and door knocked. This was seen as a good thing because flood waters receded very quickly here and it meant that people did not have to leave their homes to receive help. (Caboolture)
- One sector worker was told by one man that had been in the 1974 floods that it had taken him 9 months to get the house to the level of cleanliness and repair that volunteers had achieved this time in 4 days. (Brisbane)
- In this region, the floods may actually have made it easier to support rough sleepers – at least for eight individuals. The areas inundated are many of the spots used by rough sleepers, particularly the parks along the rivers, which made them more visible as they found other locations. Council fines and moves along rough sleepers in our area, but fortunately they have an informal (and unacknowledged) agreement with the local Housing Service Centre in which they inform the housing manager prior to moving them along. A group of eight young rough sleepers (a couple in their very early teens), known to a range of DV, Child Protection and Parole agencies were identified in this way and able to be rapidly housed and connected in with support agencies. (Caboolture)
- We received many offers of assistance from other agencies, including offers to second housing staff to continue service delivery if our staff were affected, to assist with clean up and offers of accommodation and furnishings for affected tenants. Thankfully we did not need to take these up. (Brisbane)
- Really great coordination and offers of help between services. We collected stuff for our local ER provider because we knew they would run out quickly. Church groups worked together. (Caboolture)
- One organisation's role in housing displaced people in Bundaberg:
 - Already had close partnership service with Housing & Homelessness to streamline process for assessment, registration for social housing, referral, allocation, bond loans and rental grants, in a number of cases this was completed within 45 minutes and families were able to leave the Recovery Centre with a signed lease and keys in hand. One aspect of this was pre-prepared leases. (Bundaberg)
 - Provided one-month tenancies which allowed for the full eligibility assessment process, but also protected the organisation.
 - Some frustration that a few did not follow up on their obligations to present to Housing & Homelessness to finalise eligibility after being granted a house.
 - 62 flood affected households assisted into accommodation - through this process. (Bundaberg)
- Rockhampton was effectively cut in three by the flood waters, in one area where staff were cut off, they congregated at the community hub and coordinated a collaborative service response remotely. This happened quite naturally, and through working with local councillors they were able to gain access to public buildings, council busses etc that were then used to provide practical assistance to the community – for example, transport to procure groceries, medication and supplies, moving people to Gladstone etc. (Rockhampton)
- Tenancy advocacy service received notice of additional Department of Communities funding to increase staff hours and provide additional resources (flyers etc). (Ipswich/Goodna)
- Telstra flood assistance package - great relief as all service is operating from call diversion to mobiles. (Ipswich/Goodna).

- FaHCSIA approved utilising next quarter emergency relief funds and have provided a top-up grant. (Ipswich/Goodna).
- Work was also done to create community events for people in the area to avoid the inevitable conflict and boredom that comes when people are cut off. (Rockhampton)

Broad Themes

The sector's feedback on the state's disaster response can be broadly grouped into the following themes:

- Better coordination of disaster response and more involvement of the community sector,
- Support needs of the sector,
- Local involvement,
- Organisation of Government response,
- Information and communication issues,
- Inappropriate offers of assistance and donations, and
- Offers of assistance not taken up.

Better coordination of disaster response and more involvement of the community sector

Many organisations expressed frustration at not being involved in the planning and implementation of the state's response to disasters.

Below is a cross-section of comments that reflect this frustration and the role of the non government sector in planning for and responding to disasters:

- Being able to participate in a disaster management process from planning to implementation and take on board a number of learnings.
- Disaster management plan was in place, but did not take into account for a disaster occurring over Christmas shutdown – this resulted in difficulties contacting appropriate people to get the response happening rapidly.
- Many services are irritated by complete lack of consultation by Community Recovery. They have not been consulted in either the planning or implementation of the recovery work, and some services spoke of inappropriate referrals.
- Most Community Recovery happened by 'outreach', whereby Department of Communities staff drove to flood affected areas and door knocked. This was seen as a good thing because flood waters receded very quickly here and it meant that people did not have to leave their homes to receive help. A range of services would have liked to have gone round with these staff to offer service.
- NGOs would like better planning for future disasters that encompasses how services will be involved and plans coordination of service contribution.
- Need for Community Legal Services to be part of the Disaster Management Response and the need to represent our own sector, not for Department of Justice to play gatekeeper.
- Feeling that the response was ad hoc some services reporting huge demand and going outside of their target groups others not contributing or closed and seeing very little demand in fact reporting that they were quiet. Need to assist low income areas such as Upper Ross first. I was out on Sunday delivering food; this area had no power for 7 days. Community centre in this area did not open and service such as the ERF collective ran out of church buildings that were also without power.
- In future would like to ensure that they are included or represented in disaster planning, as their service is uniquely placed to provide social and emotional support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during and following disasters.
- Feel that it is important to have community-controlled support agencies known or represented in planning processes.
- Difficulty coordinating services in isolated areas. – for example client in West End with a disability was isolated and lost power. This client required power for some of his equipment needs and Centacare staff could not physically access him. However, there were probably services in the local area that could've provided support, but Centacare workers were unable to coordinate with them. (Centacare)
- Community register and a disaster response plan.

- A network of organisations and individuals who can be contacted to respond in future disasters.
- In the future would like to see better coordination in the recovery process – i.e. procedures for recovery centre workers to scope out and engage with local services to provide ongoing support once the centre closes.
- Planning around how recovery centres can interact with a network of local services – Community Response Groups.
- Potential for larger, more resourced organisations to lead disaster planning and coordination.
- Better communicating to the public that services are here and available to provide support.
- Communities seem to coordinate it well but from a service perspective trying to get assistance from other services was very difficult.
- The need for disaster management planning to include the sector, including opening up training provided to the Department to the sector and training staff within organisations in Emergency Response so as to create specialist capacity within the sector to be deployed in such events.
- Developing a database of skills within the community to utilise local capacity in emergency response and recovery initiatives.
- Sector group input into disaster management is important for smaller, rural areas.
- Coordination point for the sector is important.
- Organisations develop disaster management plans – needs to be some resources and training to support this.
- Opportunity to make disaster relief training accessible to the sector – government staff already participate in this training regularly.
- We had notified the Department of Communities of vacancies in advance of the floods when it became evident we might have problems and were asked for the same information in the middle of the following week. We had no emergency referrals during that time. By chance (at a community meeting) we heard that the Show Grounds Centre was due to cease accommodating people, and they were struggling to find accommodation for single men. We could have housed most of them but no-one had contacted us. So my view is that in terms of housing response, it was neither accessible, nor responsive to people's needs nor well targeted. (Brisbane).
- The service offered assistance to the major volunteering organisations - never heard back.
- I saw a news item on channel nine Gold Coast News on Tuesday night about St Vincent De Paul collecting all the furnishings from a block of 27 units which are now owned by the State government and due to be demolished in March for the light rail system. I wondered why the government didn't see a perfect opportunity to house, in fully-furnished units, up to 100 or so people who are homeless due to the floods. (Gold Coast)
- Some services tried to offer help but no one in Community Recovery returned calls. I think that this lack of partnership is because most of the key services here are delivered by small, local organisations and that the Department of Communities finds it much easier to work with bigger players such as Lifeline and Centacare. (Caboolture)

Support needs of the sector

Several organisations stated that immediate funding to allow organisations to swiftly return to full capacity following natural disasters would be useful. The Sector that there were a number of useful ways that funding could be applied including:

- to employ administration staff to deal with relocating the organisation;
- to enable existing staff to continue providing services; or to

- pay out existing leases where the premises are no longer suitable to carry out the organisation's activities.

Below is an example from a Brisbane service:

- Six weeks after the flooding it is still unknown if the organisation will return to their usual premises. Their landlord has not received insurance to repair damages and is therefore cutting corners on repairs and premises. This means that the premises no longer meet the service's health and safety standards. The service has incurred the following relocation costs - costs associated with breaking leases, increased rental rate and fitting out offices expenses. The organisation is not expected to return to full operating capacity until services are relocated to permanent premises.

There was consistent feedback that better coordination and support for non-government organisations to plan for responding to natural disasters would be helpful. Examples of responses highlighting this are below:

- Develop a plan for the services industry to coordinate continuous client care during and after disasters.
- Support to develop organisational general disaster management plans.
- Opportunity to develop a self assessment framework for organisation to test how 'Disaster Ready' they are. Then provide templates to develop disaster management plans – this could be similar to the Disability Discrimination Framework. (Rockhampton)

Many organisations called for flexibility in service agreements and funding arrangements:

- Flexibility in funding arrangements to allow for services to respond rapidly to changes in community need – this can involve changes to the core activities of an organisation for a period of time, which will impact their performance reporting and outputs etc.
- The necessity for flexibility in Funding and Service Agreements to facilitate targeted responses to community need and rebuilding of the organisation's capacity.

Local Involvement

Community organisations reported concerns that the government disaster recovery response failed to recognise the importance of local knowledge and local involvement. Some examples of responses provided in the consultation process included:

- Community Recovery teams were generally welcomed for their extra capacity, knowledge and resources however it was seen that there needed to be a review of places to best locate teams and ideally a concept of including 1 local community member in rotating teams would be developed to avoid issues with incoming teams not knowing local services/supports, inadequate maps / local geographical knowledge, receiving insufficient briefing time with rotating teams etc. (Rural South West Region)
- Important to use local resources rather than fly others in – needs to be process for identifying local networks and resources in emergencies. (Rockhampton)
- Local knowledge and relationships are key to responding effectively and ensuring the safety of community members. (Rockhampton)

Organisation of Government response

The government response to the Queensland floods was disorganised and inconsistent throughout Queensland. Some examples of reports received from organisations are included below:

- Apparently it took some time to establish a service centre and people showing up to the first and second venues (which turned out to be inappropriate, one because of flood risk!) were bused to the third and final venue. Some community members reported dissatisfaction with the Moreton Bay Council response to their needs during and after the flood. (Caboolture)

- Major concern was for who are reliant on HACC services, people trapped in homes with no services including meals on wheels, nursing services etc.
- The need for current, concise and accurate information is paramount, and in our area it was scarce. Rumours and inaccurate information were rife, and in the absence of a reliable source of information, people just made it up, causing unease within the community generally. The emergency communication channels established nationally via ABC radio etc needed to be utilised in some local areas, but worked well in others. Facebook is a double edged sword, becoming a source of information in the vacuum, but also full of hysteria which was harmful.
- A disability support service explained that there were people in homes with no contact with anyone except the service provider - the importance of having comprehensive emergency plans in place for services - both in terms of the individual clients and for the services themselves.
- Things to consider include how to pay staff if electronics go down, making sure plans are up to date (e.g. if staff are on leave, what to do organisationally in these situations?), how to maintain contact with staff and clients, who does what (i.e. moving files, turning off electricity - allocating specific roles and responsibilities).
- Out of town services explained that Department of Communities teams, didn't communicate with local organisations so we had to operate if they weren't even here to minimise service gaps. While the Lockyer Valley received fast and substantial assistance - it was too centralised and therefore not accessed appropriately.
- The Recovery Centres were disorganised in terms of processing housing applications. In spite of the impact of the floods there was no flexibility in policy or procedures. Affected people were interviewed and then still had to produce the same documentation as before, and then to attend their nearest Housing Service Centre, with no assistance to get there. If that was the case they should have been directed there in the first place. (Brisbane)
- Inconsistent responses from schools re: providing funds for uniforms and books for flood affected families.
- Army and other services could be engaged at an earlier stage. Especially during evacuation – their support and access to resources such as temporary accommodation and storage would have been incredibly useful.
- Department of Communities community recovery teams had been given postcode 4300 as area affected but this is large area and some parts affected significantly and others not. Differences in interpretation with different departmental staff as to what is flood affected caused a great deal of community disharmony. (Ipswich)
- Belief that small local evacuations areas are needed.

Information and communication issues

Services throughout Queensland reported information and communication issues throughout the initial stages of the disaster recovery process. Some information received during the consultation process has been included below:

- The information from the Department of Communities about funding and support for their service was varied and difficult to acquire. Often they were referred back their CSO who either was unsure of the responses, or unsure of what information they could give the service.
- Transport and Main Roads were really disappointing. Information on road access was vital to get services to clients and it was not available. Used ABC local radio and constantly monitoring to hear local access information.
- Lack of information locally about what help might be available, or where to go for help. People often found family, friends or strangers, then made use of what they had, only to discover later help was available they just didn't know about it - particularly those from out of the area or those who are already disadvantages (low socio-economic), but also locals.

- Better coordination of information would be good, including quicker reactions from Government Departments. Whether it is to get your birth certificate or licence again, to feed your cattle, or to find somewhere to live - much of this was slow to happen until Brisbane area became affected. The 139... (road closure information) has been inaccurate since early December in our area, adding to the workload and frustration of services such as police. (Sunshine Coast)
- Community needs better education and awareness about how to behave in preparation for, during and post disaster mode, perhaps as part of storm season preparation education. (Wide Bay Burnett)

Inappropriate offers of assistance and donations

Services already experiencing an unprecedented increase in work load were often contending with the additional burden associated with managing issues associated with inappropriate donations.

- Donations of physical goods at the time of the crisis created significant problems including: emotionally draining dealing with donors who didn't want no for an answer; poor quality; volunteers needed to coordinate; storage space. Community education is needed to inform Australian public in this area. (Ipswich)
- The out of town physical donations was a logistical nightmare and has caused far more grief than the benefits received. People didn't even ask if we needed stuff, they just turned up with trucks and expected us to take it - and gave us a hard time if we said we didn't need and couldn't take more. Someone has to start change the national thinking around this - aid responses have to be about what's best for affected areas - not what makes donors feel good about themselves!
- Many Gold Coast volunteers were turned away (when there was not enough room on buses going to Ipswich).
- Lots of people who had put their names down with Volunteering Queensland were not ever contacted.
- Better coordination of external volunteers needed. Members of the community went and helped families as needed, but there was an influx of volunteers from other areas who were sometimes turned away and not given very good direction.

General comments

- If we can do this (house people quickly and without onerous paperwork) in a disaster, why can't we do it all the time?
- Local Government announced that there had been little damage in Caboolture other than 'some flooding in the back blocks'. Housing along Caboolture River is mostly owned or tenanted by poorer people who were greatly affected. Streets such as Mary, Frank and Torrens are notorious for being areas experiencing social problems such as high incidence of poverty and frequent police call outs for violence and drug related matters. These were all severely flood affected and many people including our local state MP have expressed the view to me that this is one more incidence of council's attitude to people with high level support needs in the shire. (Caboolture)
- Homelessness hub kept their 6 week residency rules in place.

Attachment 1- Summary of organisations visited

Table 1 Summary of organisations visited

Region:	Completed Survey:	Visited by QCOSS:
Banana	1	
Barcaldine	1	
Brisbane	1	5
Caboolture	4	
Central Queensland	2	
Emerald		10
Gold Coast	2	
Ipswich, Goodna & Gales	1	6
Rockhampton	1	4
Rural South West Queensland	1	5
Sandgate	1	
State-wide	1	
Sunshine Coast	2	
West End	1	
Wide Bay Burnett	1	6
TOTALS:	20	36

Attachment 2 – Survey Questions

Thank you for your assistance in capturing the impact and response of the Community Services sector to the Qld floods.

We are seeking information from across the state (not just flood affected areas) on how services locally have been affected and responded but also how the 'Community Recovery' response can be improved in future based on learnings from the current experience.

You do not have to complete the whole survey. You may wish to only answer those questions on which you have information. You may answer directly from your experience or from a broader local perspective.

1. Your Details:

Region:

Are you responding from your individual service perspective or from a regional viewpoint?

Service Name:

2. Have any services experienced damage to property/ies as a result of the floods?

Type:

Names of services affected:

Contact details:

3. If damage to services has been sustained, has this affected their capacity to operate? If so, what percentage of capacity are services currently running at:

0 (Significant Impact)

20%

40%

60%

80%

100% (No Impact)

Date and organisation information:

4. Are organisations' facilities being used in community recovery?

Organisation Name

If so, how many?

What are they being used for?

5. Are organisations delivering services outside their core business?

Yes

No

If yes, what sort of services?

What percentage of staff time?

For how long will this be needed?

Does the organisation have staff to provide the additional service?

Organisation Name

6. Can you please estimate the percentage increase in demand for core services:

0 (No increase)

20%

40%

60%

80%

100% (Considerable increase)

Comments

7. Can you please estimate the percentage increase in demand for services and supports outside of your service agreement:

0 (No increase)
 20%
 40%
 60%
 80%
 100% (Considerable increase)

Comments

8. Please record positive feedback, stories, responses that you are aware of including:
- 'beyond the call of duty' experiences.
- stories about volunteers and their contributions.
- innovative service responses to presenting challenges.

If you would like to submit these stories/outstanding contributions for inclusion in QCOSS publications please provide your details below and we will be in touch. Thanks!

9. Please record Systemic lessons or learnings for the future.
For example:
- Was the response well coordinated (was it easy for people to access information?)
- Was it enough – was demand met (eg were there long waiting periods to access assistance)
- Was it targeted correctly – were there people who missed out?
- What was the relative impact on most disadvantaged/low income people?

10. Is there an understanding and coherent assessment of the ongoing service need/response to support recovery and rebuilding in your community?

11. Thank you so much for your input, it will assist in capturing the community response and impact from Region to Region in order to share the triumphs as well as the learnings.

Stay safe!

Please add any further comments or information below.

Attachment 3 – Flood Visit Framework

FLOOD VISIT FRAMEWORK

Allow the discussions to be free flowing and directed by the service provider, however some guided questions covering the following key themes and quantifiable feedback will assist in developing and verifying the information and recommendations we will be putting forward in our submission to the Flood Enquiry.

Key themes:

Sector Impacts	Innovative service/sector response	Impact on local community members and their needs	Impact on disadvantaged and at-risk individuals in the local community
<p>Damage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much? • What type? • What capacity operating at? <p>Support Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the local sectors needs in response? • What are the local sectors needs in recovery/rebuilding? • Issues for the local sector/organisations in providing core services? • Are they providing services beyond their core services? • What are they? • What is the increase in demand? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the local sector respond? • Are there any examples of innovation or collaboration in responding? • Were there any administrative or compliance requirements that were waved that could be reduced long term? • What have we learnt? • What could/should we do next time? 	<p>Increased demand for services/supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types? • How much? • Who's providing? • What is the gap? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are they? • What supports are they accessing? • Has the demand in this group increased? • By how much? • Have service users been displaced by increased community demand for supports? • How many?