

Queensland Government
Response to the *South East
Queensland Rainfall and
Flooding Event February to
March 2022 Review Report*



South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding Event

Over the course of 22 February 2022 to 7 March 2022, South East Queensland experienced a significant rainfall and flooding event. Intense rainfall led to flash flooding and riverine flooding across large areas of South East Queensland and the Sunshine Coast.

Across a 14-day period, the south east areas of the State experienced record sustained rainfall and subsequent flooding that resulted in the loss of 13 lives, 94 emergency alert campaigns issued, 331 people evacuated, 18,021 damage assessments completed, with an estimated social, financial and economic cost of \$7.7 billion to Queensland.

South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding Event February to March 2022 Review Report 1: 2022-2023

On 15 March 2022, the Premier and Minister for the Olympics requested that the Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management (IGEM) undertake a review of the event to, amongst other matters, assess the effectiveness of preparedness activities of Queensland Government agencies and relevant local governments who were engaged in response in those areas where Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements were activated.

On 31 August 2022, IGEM delivered the *South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding February to March 2022 Review Report 1: 2022-2023* (the Review Report) to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, the Honourable Mark Ryan MP.

The Queensland Government is committed to continual improvement of disaster management arrangements and welcomes the Review Report which contains 19 recommendations directed at the State and Local governments. Recommendations cover a range of areas for focus including:

- adding and/or clarifying existing guidance regarding flood risk and the use of the Emergency Alert system by responsible agencies;
- identifying options for strengthening the flood warning network;
- providing additional instructional support, training and exercising for users of the Emergency Alert system;
- use of the Australian Warning System for all nationally-agreed hazards, supported by a community education program;
- increasing subscriptions to Local Government opt-in information services;
- assessing interagency information system operability;
- reviewing deployment protocols and information capture; and
- reviewing emergency procedures for referable dams.



Our commitment

The Queensland Government thanks IGEM for its work on the review and the recommendations within the Review Report and all our frontline services who kept Queenslanders safe during this event.

The Government has been working closely with IGEM and relevant stakeholders, including local governments, to determine how recommendations can be given best effect.

Our State disaster management agencies have already identified opportunities to build on existing good practice and ensure that changes to existing systems are purposeful, achievable, consulted on, well-executed and communicated widely.

Additionally, work has already commenced on implementing the recommendations, with specific priority given to those recommendations that are due to be implemented by 1 November 2022. All of those recommendations are on track for completion.

The Queensland Government values its strong relationship with local governments and is committed to providing ongoing support to drive continuous improvement in the delivery of timely and effective warnings to communities, including through the Emergency Alert system.

Since the flooding events earlier in the year, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has been actively engaging with local governments and providing updates on new learnings of the Emergency Alert system capacities and best practice in terms of processing Emergency Alert messaging for various scenarios.

QFES is continuing to provide workshops, webinars and refresher training to ensure that processes and protocols for the efficient use of Emergency Alert are well understood in the lead up to the severe weather season and exercised by local and district disaster groups, as recommended by the IGEM.

Two large scale exercises have already been held in recent months, which have included all Queensland disaster management stakeholders and Commonwealth partner agencies. These exercises tested the entire disaster management arrangements in Queensland and across borders and included in depth discussion of community warning requirements.

The Australian Warning System (AWS) is a new national approach that uses a nationally consistent set of icons and the three warning levels of Advice (Yellow), Watch and Act (Orange), and Emergency Warning (Red).

The warnings, along with a community education campaign, have already been implemented for the hazard of bushfire in Queensland with work progressing on the use of the AWS for other hazards.



Of relevance, a flood warnings workshop was held on 8 September 2022, and the outcomes are being used to develop consistent AWS flood warning templates, which will be available for local governments to use this severe weather season.

This also includes messaging guidance for Emergency Alerts regarding flood and ensure the warnings on official websites and other platforms will be clearer and consistent with national messaging.

To ensure alignment with the Clear Explicit Translatable Language principles as recommended by the IGEM, these templates are currently undergoing community and academic testing.

The Review Report acknowledges that while information flow was effective overall, there is opportunity to enhance systems connectivity and interoperability to support incident management and provide relevant agencies with a common operating picture.

The Queensland Government is progressing a number of initiatives, including options to enhance IT systems, and through the exercising for disaster events, to strengthen systems and help to identify any areas for continued improvement.

The Queensland Government is also providing \$12.8 million over the forward estimates to modernise the technology at the Queensland Emergency Operations Centre, which includes the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

The Review Report also considered dam safety protocols. While recognising the maturity of the dam safety regulatory system, and noting that Wivenhoe dam was well managed throughout the event, potential improvements to the Emergency Action Plan for the Referable Dam Guidelines were highlighted.

The Queensland Government, through the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water is committed to continual improvement of the dam safety system, and has already commenced planning for the review of the Emergency Action Plan Guidelines.

There are already many examples of good practice across the State. With the ongoing collaboration between state government agencies, local councils, non-government partners and the tireless work of public safety staff, officers and volunteers, Queensland can continue to strengthen its disaster management system and build even more resilient communities.

