



GE

Policy Leader – Energy Infrastructure

GE Energy Australia & New Zealand
Level 1

MILTON QLD 4064

March 25, 2011

Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry
PO Box 1738
Brisbane QLD 4001

info@floodcommission.qld.gov.au

RE: Submission to Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry

General Electric (GE) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

GE commends the work of all levels of government, Australian Defence Force personnel, local and visiting emergency services staff, volunteers and members of the community for the comprehensive response to the tragic flooding.

GE's contribution will focus on two parts of the Inquiry's terms of reference. These are:

- the preparation and planning by federal, state and local governments; emergency services and the community for the 2010/2011 floods in Queensland, and
- the measures to manage the supply of essential services such as power, water and communications during the 2010/2011 flood events.

GE in Queensland and flood assistance

General Electric employs 900 staff and it is a longstanding contributor - with government and local partners - in the finance, infrastructure (energy and water), health, transport and entertainment sectors of Queensland.

In addition to our existing presence in Queensland and our ambitions for major projects such as those associated with the burgeoning CSG-LNG and resources industry, carbon capture and storage (CCS), water treatment, renewables, healthcare, transport, aviation and finance, GE is proud to be a Q2 Partner of the Queensland Government.

GE was recognized as a Q2 Partner for delivering the Cleaner Seas for Cairns wastewater treatment project and its continued development of the Wandoan Power Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC) power plant with CCS.

GE has sought to respond to the devastation to large areas of Queensland as a result of the flooding crisis and Cyclone Yasi.

To support the immediate response to the flooding crisis, GE has offered:

- \$265,000 donation to Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal;
 - \$25,000 from fundraising through our retail partner Harvey Norman;
 - emergency measures for GE Capital customers on a case-by-case basis including restructuring loans, waiving applicable fees, suspending loan and credit card repayments, expediting settlement of insurance claims;
 - GE-produced chemicals for clean-up of inundated residences and businesses;
- and
- mobile water treatment equipment and placing standby field service staff to assist in instance of wastewater treatment plant damage or outage.

GE is proud of the additional fundraising and offers of our staff have made to assist family, friends and indeed strangers impacted over large areas of the State.

This response was based upon GE's approach to providing assistance to our employees and their communities in natural disasters, which in recent years has included Hurricane Katrina, the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, earthquakes in Haiti, Italy and China, and floods in the mid-west of the United States.

A guide to GE's response to natural disasters is available at http://www.ge.com/files_foundation/pdf/ge_foundation_disaster_relief_fact_sheet.pdf

Therefore, as a Q2 Partner, a major employer and a contributor to the immediate response, GE proposes to work with the Queensland Government via its agencies on the following initiatives.

Preparation and planning by governments and emergency services

The comprehensive response to floods was based upon the capabilities of emergency services personnel, the preparations, planning and resources made by local councils, the Queensland and Australian governments.

The Australian Defence Force and assistance from other government and non-government agencies, such as Red Cross, played an integral role in the immediate response and establishing the platform for recovery.

At its meeting on February 13, 2011, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) approved the "National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: Building our nation's resilience to disasters" and to "take immediate steps to implement it".

A key component of the Strategy states "building better links with the private sector is a particular priority, not least because infrastructure is often owned or managed by private interests, which deliver services that enable communities to function. Businesses, whether large or small, can play an important role in preparing for and dealing with consequences for a major emergency or event. This role is key in helping the community maintain continuity of services following a disaster".

The Strategy envisages "a range of models [be] used to engage businesses in all phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery".

GE believes "call when needed" register for required equipment and capabilities, ideally nationally, should be a model to be considered to engage business. Such a register can assist emergency service organizations to obtain equipment and consumables they might require in the event of natural disasters.

For instance, GE offered to the Department of Community Safety (DCS) mobile water purification equipment for use in inundated communities where clean water supplies were disrupted due to loss of power to treatment plants, inundation of the plant or raw sewage pollution. While the equipment was not used, DCS expressed an interest in its application in future events and understanding its capabilities.

The mobile units are housed in conventional ISO shipping containers or are skid-mounted for convenient transportation around Australia. Typical flow rates of the units range from 10,000 litres per hour to 113,000l/hr, and for higher flow rates multiple units can be used.

DCS currently operate a register for fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, particularly to respond to incidents during its bushfire season each year. This register is maintained in the form of an ongoing tender and private sector respondents are registered in case their aircraft is required.

A register would allow emergency services organizations to be able to immediately access information about the availability of equipment, knowing its capabilities have been assessed against specifications in the tender and allow them to deploy in the response to the natural disaster.

GE believes a national register would be preferable, particularly to companies like GE operating in all States and Territories.

If operated as a tender, as per the DCS example, it could be managed within the existing budget of the Australian Government's Emergency Management Australia (EMA) with the cooperation of State and Territory agencies.

GE has made representations to the Australian and Queensland governments on the feasibility of a "call when needed" register and provided advice to EMQ about its establishment.

Manage the supply of essential services

The maintenance of essential public services, such as water, sewerage and electricity assets, is critical to the speed of clean-up, recovery and resilient of communities in instances of natural disasters.

During the recent floods and Cyclone Yasi, a number of affected communities had water and electricity supplies cut or severely constrained due to damage and inundation.

A key role for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA), under the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Bill 2011, is "to decide priorities for community

infrastructure and community services needed for the protection, rebuilding and recovery of affected communities”.

GE believes available funding programs for the restoration and replacement of essential infrastructure should be clarified and an audit of flood prone or at risk infrastructure be commissioned with a view to strategic repositioning of assets.

In 2009, the Australian Government commissioned a report “Climate Change Risks to Australia’s Coast”, which found that “there has been little analysis of the implications of climate change for the provision of essential services in the coastal zone... [and] facilities that are underpinning delivery of services are in close proximity to the coast and could be at risk of inundation and erosion as a result of climate change”.

The Report recommended a national audit of critical infrastructure in the coastal zone.

Local Government Association of Queensland and Infrastructure Australia could provide advice to the QRA and undertake an audit of flood prone or at risk infrastructure.

The risk is affected infrastructure is simply restored in the same location, with the same equipment, materials and capabilities, and the same vulnerabilities to future natural disasters.

In terms of sewerage, local governments need to ensure treatment plants adjacent to the Marine Park are upgraded in accordance with the Wastewater Discharges to Coastal Waters Policy for nutrient removal in the State Coastal Management Plan – Queensland’s Coastal Policy.

The necessary restoration, upgrade or replacement of water treatment infrastructure will require additional funding for the plant owners and operators, typically local governments in Queensland.

While GE believes the NDRRA guidelines for essential public assets should be clarified, additional sources of finance will be required in any case.

If GE can provide any additional information or clarification, please contact me on

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Policy Leader – Energy Infrastructure
(Australia & New Zealand)
GE Energy