



AN ASSOCIATION OF
ACCOMMODATION AND
CARE SERVICE
ORGANISATIONS

20 April 2011

The Hon Justice Holmes
Commissioner
Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry
GPO Box 1738
Brisbane, QLD 4001



Dear Commissioner

Aged Care Queensland welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Queensland Floods Commission Inquiry.

Aged Care Queensland (ACQ) is a not-for-profit association consisting of more than 400 members who provide care and accommodation services to aged and disabled Queenslanders across the state. ACQ members operate nursing homes, hostels, independent living units, rental accommodation for the aged, serviced apartments, respite care and in-home care services. Aged Care Queensland members were amongst those affected by the recent Queensland floods.

The floods impacted aged care providers to varying extents. For some providers the floods meant preparing and monitoring the safety and wellbeing of clients living at home, for others a full evacuation of a residential care facility or retirement village was required. The floods presented aged care providers with many challenges and left some community care offices and vehicles completely destroyed.

Following the recent events we have now commenced work on a project that aims to ensure that our members are appropriately supported and prepared for the next high risk period for natural disasters. As part of this project ACQ aims to investigate aged care providers preparedness and response to the natural disasters that occurred in Queensland in 2010-2011. The results of this research project will be presented in a written report titled *Report on Aged Care Providers Preparedness and Response to the 2011 Natural Disasters in Queensland*. This report is due to be completed by October 2011. ACQ plans to submit a copy of this report to the Queensland Floods Inquiry Commission once it is completed.

As an interim response, ACQ would like to table the following concerns relating to the Queensland floods:

- ACQ members across the state have reported varying levels of support from Local Government and Local Disaster Management Groups. In some instances the level of support has been high, in other instances our service providers have struggled to be recognised as a priority group for evacuation and essential services such as electricity.
- ACQ considers support with evacuations and essential services as vital for aged care and other congregate service providers in the event of an emergency. This is

particularly the case for those residential care facilities providing care to older persons who have high level physical, social or psychological needs and are functionally very dependent.

- Both residential and community care providers have reported receiving multiple phone calls from various government departments in the midst of the floods. Whilst services appreciated the concern and support offered by government, the frequency and timing of the calls were at times inappropriate. Many community care service providers were asked, during the height of the floods, to provide details on the number of clients that would be disadvantaged by the floods and the estimated cost of recovery. They were receiving these phone calls whilst they were still struggling to secure their offices and ensure the safety of both clients and staff.
- A number of issues have been raised with regards to the suitability of evacuation centres for frail older people and people with a disability. Accessibility of evacuation centre facilities such as toilets and showers presented as an issue. There was also concern about the appropriateness of inflatable beds for frail older people. Therefore we would support early attention to any interim measure to construct adequate evacuation centres to ensure safe and appropriate facilities for local communities including the very old and frail persons.
- Enhanced communication with local disaster management groups would assist the future disaster management plans of aged care providers. ACQ believes that local government disaster management groups could also benefit from greater engagement with aged care providers. For example residential aged care facilities and retirement villages are often well positioned to assist the community in the event of an emergency. Likewise community care service providers could link in to evacuation centres and provide personal care and other supports to older people and people with a disability who have been forced to evacuate from their own homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this initial feedback on behalf of the ACQ membership. Aged Care Queensland would be pleased to provide further detail around these issues and discuss opportunities to better connect Queensland's aged care and disaster management systems.

If you require any further information, the contact person for ACQ's Disaster Management Project is [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Nick Ryan
Chief Executive Officer

Affiliated with:



Aged & Community
Services Queensland

