

Queensland Floods Commission Enquiry

Emailed to

submissions@floodcommission.qld.gov.au

A submission submitted by



It is an unfortunate situation that so many people did not listen to the official warnings, and as such, suffered a lot more than was necessary because they basically ignored what was being said. Many thought that Wivenhoe Dam would save Brisbane. The lack of understanding was further demonstrated by the fact so many did not even try to save any of their possessions as demonstrated by not moving possessions from the bottom floor to the top floor when it was possible to do so. Another contributing fact is it was 37 years since the last flood and so many new people did not understand what could happen. Besides this anyone under 45 would possibly not remember the last flood if they were living in Brisbane at the time.

The unit my mother lives in on the river in New Farm had flood water in the garage area only.

I am putting in this submission as I feel I have a plan that could be of great assistance to not only Brisbane but any city or town in Australia as a result of the recent flooding.

My proposal covers the following items:

1. Identification of properties in all flood prone areas using an ID for floodwater depths.
2. A simple warning system to alert potential flood victims.
3. Powers to enforce evacuations.
4. An assessment level for flood cover by Insurance companies.

Identification of properties in all flood prone areas using an ID for floodwater depths.

All properties in Brisbane have a potential flood level. Fortunately the majority will never flood. My idea is that all properties in known flood prone areas will have a number that is relevant to the flood height.

For example those areas such as Northey St and parts of Albion would have a level F1. Around Chelmer it could be say F20 to F29 depending upon the river height. These "F's" are numbers so people can calculate the depth that water will invade their property during a flood. Each F level could be say ½ m or 1m. A lot of information is now available as a result of the 1974 and 2011 floods.

My Proposal is that the "F" number is allocated to each property in known flood areas and by law it will be located in the electricity metre box for houses and on a plate just inside the entry door for units. Fines to apply if removed and it is a requirement if a property sells then the number must be in place at settlement.

Areas, locations or groups of suburbs would have different group numbers for identification. By this I mean that the area below the William Jolly Bridge would be allocated F1 to F9 as this would cover a water depth of 4.5 metres if the scale is .5 metre per number. William Jolly Bridge to say Indooroopilly Bridge would be allocated F10 to F19. Indooroopilly Bridge to Centenary Bridge would be allocated F20 to F29. Enoggera Creek could be allocated F50. Kedron Brook could be allocated F60.

One reason for the different numbers is that people would be more likely to take notice if say F28 was mentioned as people above the Indooroopilly Bridge could expect their block to have 4 metres of water over it if they are an F20 or .5 metre if they are an F28.

To allocate an F number to properties I will use this example of say a street in Windsor that has a gradient where the land rises by say 9 metres from bottom to top. The houses with street numbers 1 to 11 will have say an F1 plate in the electricity metre box. Houses 12 to 15 will have F2. Houses 16 to 28 will have F3. Houses 29 on might not have any F numbers in the meter box as there is no record of flooding in the past. Using the above example if a warning is issued that says an F3 flood alert has been issued, then those houses with F3 will have .5 metre of water over them, F2 will have 1 metres and F1 will have 1.5 metres of water over the block. The basic concept is that for every number above the number on your F plate in your metre box you will have an extra .5m of water on your block.

In places like Gympie each F level could be 1 metre or in flatter areas each F level may be .25m but the measurement used would be consistent for that locality depending upon the land gradient.

A simple warning system to alert potential flood victims.

Just imagine if you could issue a flood warning for example saying
“all those areas with an F1 flood level in the Albion and Windsor areas can expect flooding to property on today's high tide at 10 am.

Or in an extreme case as we had recently
“all properties on the Brisbane River upstream from the Indooroopilly Bridge with an F20 will flood tonight and those with an F21 & F22 will flood in the next 24 to 36 hours. Areas between the Indooroopilly Bridge and the city with an F11 will flood after midnight and those with an F12 to F13 will flood by midday. If you do not know your flood risk level then look in your electricity metre box.”

Or to identify a single or a group of suburbs
“Chelmer to Corinda will expect a flood level of F22.” This could mean that those parts with F20 will have say 1.5m depth of water, F21 say 1m and F22 .5m

Or with local heavy rain in say The Gap.
“all properties on Enoggera Creek in The Gap and Ashgrove areas with an F50 to F53 can expect flash flooding with today's heavy rain where 100mm was recorded at the Enoggera Reservoir by 4pm.”

I would think ground level or river bank level is the bench mark for all readings in all areas.

With the SMS system you have you could also advise people as the different flood levels rise and properties become potential flood victims. All media outlets and government departments would all use the same format as I have proposed.

I am aware of business people who were away on holidays who could have returned in time to save more of their business if they had received an SMS or another case where two cars could have been saved if the neighbour, who had the house keys, was told where car keys were. The SMS could have saved these people a lot of money because they could have had someone save their property.

Powers to enforce evacuations.

To help authorities so they do not have to do so called emergency evacuations, especially at night, the plan should include the following -
eg. “those properties with an F16 must evacuate as the river has reached 3m and this will be enforced by the SES and the Police. Those with an F17 should start to prepare to evacuate as if the river rises to 3.5m you will be forced to evacuate for your safety and the power will be disconnected by Energex.”
The same system could be used for allowing people to return to their homes/units after services are repaired.

For government emergency payments, people would have to state address and F level which could be checked on the data base and this could reduce fraud.

An assessment level for flood cover by Insurance companies.

To make it easier for insurance companies to offer flood insurance then the “F” number could be used. I am not flood prone and I do not approve of insurance companies being forced to offer flood insurance as I feel my premium will rise as I will subsidise the flood prone properties.

As it is 37 years since the 1974 flood most residents had no idea about floods and were in many cases totally unable to understand or comprehend what was about to happen. I have spoken to many who believed Wivenhoe Dam would protect us. About a fortnight before the flood I said to people that I would like to see Wivenhoe reduced to at least 70% as I could see a possible severe flooding problem as the ground was saturated and the rain was moving south from Central Queensland.

As a result of this misunderstanding about flooding, many people lost valuable items all because they did not think, believe or understand what could happen. I might also add that I have been through a flood in 1976 when I was on the land west of Goondiwindi and I lost 3500 sheep. Cleaning up buildings and repairing fences after the flood was not pleasant.

I hope that you may see merit in some or all of my proposal. I am more than happy to discuss this further with you if you wish as I have only tried to be reasonably brief. Many minds could improve on the basic plan I have outlined. I know it could be applied to other areas of Australia such as Ipswich, Emerald, Rockhampton or in Victoria.

Another point is that anyone listening to the premier on TV would assume that all of Queensland was affected by the flood. Perhaps there should have been a visible map showing what areas were affected by flood water. Then people would have been able to see that some of the tourist spots were unaffected and this may have saved the cost we now have of advertising to the potential tourists.

So I know you have read this I would appreciate a reply to [REDACTED] or a phone call on [REDACTED]. Thank you for taking time to read my submission – I hope my thoughts can help you for planning for future floods.

Ian Lauder