

Mundubbera community meeting – 29 March 2011 Summary of discussion

Background

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry held a community meeting at the Community Hall in Mundubbera. Six residents attended the meeting. The following summary is an overview of the issues raised with Commission staff by Mundubbera residents. It is not meant to represent the views of the community as a whole.

Issues arising

1. *Early warning systems*

- There was little warning in town – locals only had a few hours to move their possessions to higher ground.
- The fire brigade siren was used at the flood peak to warn people about the dangers.
- Local residents were able to estimate the height of the water using the 1971 flood peak as an estimate.
- Local fruit pickers in the town helped with preparation efforts and many volunteers also helped with the clean-up.

2. *Essential services / business needs*

- Food started to run low in town during the flood event but locals were able to get by with the provisions that were available.
- Water and sewerage systems were affected by the flood waters.
- The council provided free rubbish pick-ups for locals during the immediate response period.

3. *Land planning*

- In times of inundation or major storms water runs straight down the main street and inundates those homes at the lower end.
- North Burnett Regional Council has allowed new buildings to be developed in areas clearly affected by and subject to flooding in the past.
- Given the situation of the town, any potential levees built to protect the town from future flooding would have to be enormous. Some locals considered that it may be more effective to develop strategies to divert the run-off water from higher points of town so that heavy rains and floodwaters were re-routed.
- Twenty-two houses in Mundubbera were damaged by floodwaters. This included floodwaters from Red Gully as well as those stranded on the other side of the Burnett River.

4. Insurance

- Those people who had contents insurance for their homes were not able to claim as goods were stored in the downstairs laundry under the house (and swept away) and not within the house itself.
- One of the insurance companies helped define 'floods' for affected residents but locals considered the definition needed to be simplified across the board.

5. Rebuilding efforts

Funding issues

- The rebuilding process has been frustrating – one resident stated that she had been required by a government agency to contribute \$7000 as an up-front payment towards reconstruction costs, which could later be recouped from the Structural Assistance Grant (\$10 500). Some of the worst affected residents were not in a financial position to be able to pay the up-front payment.
- Locals are unable to choose their own builder as the builder needs to be endorsed by a government agency before work can begin – this has caused delays in commencing building work and the length of time people are out of their homes.
- One local builder stated that no other builders are seeking work in the region due to the administrative burden created by government in the rebuilding phase. As a result, some flood affected areas have found it difficult to find builders to reconstruct flood damaged houses.
- Some locals were of the view that the quotes provided by a government agency for the replacement of fixtures and fittings seemed excessive and queried whether they could arrange for their own quotes which may be more competitive.
- There were some allegations of false claims for financial assistance within the community.

Community efforts

- The SES worked hard and the hospital was readied for the impacts of the flood.
- Those worst affected by the floods stated that they were relatively ignored by the council in the recovery phased.
- The council advised that it was unable to assist the bowls club to clean up the interior of the building as it was only able to assist with the clean up of sporting fields (that is, the greens themselves).
- Some locals stated that they sought the assistance of friends and neighbours to self-evacuate.
- Community members in the Auburn River catchment area were isolated for quite some time.