

**Response to Requirement to Provide Written Information  
Councillor Mick Kruger, Mayor  
31 March 2011**

I, Councillor Sydney Michael Kruger, as Mayor of the Fraser Coast Regional Council, provide the following information in response to the Requirement to Provide Written Information issued by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry on 22 March 2011:

**1. The local planning and preparation, including training, undertaken in advance of and/or in relation to the 2010/2011 flood events.**

The Fraser Coast Regional Council undertook a series of disaster management training activities including an area evacuation exercise "Quick Look" on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Council was joined in this exercise by the following agencies:

- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Wide Bay Water Corporation
- State Emergency Service
- Emergency Management Queensland
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Fire & Rescue Service (Urban & rural)
- Queensland Health
- Queensland Ambulance Service
- Q Build
- Department of Transport & Main Roads

**2. Any measures implemented immediately prior to or during the 2010/2011 flood events that were designed to mitigate the effect of any flooding (for example, sandbagging, temporary levees), including an assessment of the performance of those measures.**

It is standard practice for Council to assist the State Emergency Service with the co-ordination of sandbagging in preparation for flood events. This includes the provision of sand at key locations likely to be impacted. This practice was followed during the 2010/2011 flood events with sandbagging undertaken at numerous locations.

In preparation for the first peak of the January 2011 Maryborough flood event, a temporary levee was erected as a precautionary measure in Adelaide Street, Maryborough. Fortunately, water levels did not reach the levee.

Council's communications with local businesses provided ongoing updates in relation to expected flood levels. This allowed businesses such as car yards and the caravan park (located near the Lamington Bridge) to relocate vehicles and mobile cabins to higher ground.

Unfortunately, due to the speed of the rising waters, businesses and properties located in the Maryborough Marina area were not able to be fully vacated and significant property damage was sustained.

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**3. Local participation, or otherwise, in Emergency Management Queensland's (EMQ) 2010 Pre-Season Flood and Cyclone Workshop, including an assessment of the local assistance gained thereby.**

As part of the Wide Bay Burnett area the Fraser Coast was involved in Emergency Management Queensland's 2010 Pre-Season Flood and Cyclone Workshop conducted in Gympie on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010. Participants from the Fraser Coast Regional Council who accompanied me on this workshop included:

- Andy Gaze, Executive Manager Environmental Health & Regulation
- Martyn Walton, Executive Manager Business Operations
- Chris Vakas, Disaster Planning Coordinator
- Gerry Brennan, Senior Environmental Health Officer

**4. Local participation, or otherwise, in EMQ's 2010 Consultation Sessions concerning the proposed changes to the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (Qld), including an assessment of the local assistance gained thereby.**

The Fraser Coast Regional Council was represented at the consultation sessions conducted by EMQ in relation to the proposed changes to the *Disaster Management Act 2003*. I personally attended the Consultation session held at the Maryborough RSL on 23 July 2010.

Changes to the *Disaster Management Act 2003* were also discussed at LDMG meetings held on 24 June 2010 and 9 December 2010.

**5. Any measures taken to train and/or equip the local State Emergency Service (SES), including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof.**

Council undertakes its joint responsibility for the training and funding of the local State Emergency Service branches in conjunction with EMQ in compliance with its legislative obligations. Council works collaboratively with EMQ to ensure SES branches within the Fraser Coast region are fully equipped to meet the demands for this area.

The level of funding available each year is considered during budget deliberations in order to fully assess and meet the projected demands for the coming financial year.

**6. The local actions undertaken in advance of and/or in respect of the 2010/2011 flood events in relation to resourcing, co-ordination and deployment of any personnel and equipment.**

At 11:35 pm on Friday the 7 January 2011 Council received a 'Flood Warning for the Mary River' notification of the expected impact to the Fraser Coast due to Mary River flooding likely to occur in the Maryborough area from the Bureau of Meteorology. The then Chief Executive Officer consulted with Council's Disaster Planning Coordinator to put operational staff on notice and commence implementation of the flood plan. As advance warning had not been received from the Bureau of Meteorology, time constraints created challenges with respect to activating the Local Disaster Management Group.

The FCRC Event Log of Internal Flood Procedures (Attachment 1 - reference number 2014812) and LDMG Event Log (Attachment 2 - reference number 2007827) are both attached for information purposes and provide details on actions taken throughout the course of the event.

As the event occurred during a peak holiday period, many staff were called upon to return from annual leave in order to ensure appropriate staffing levels and expertise were available during this time.



**7. The local actions undertaken in respect of the 2010/2011 flood events in relation to immediate management, response and recovery operations, including the co-ordination and deployment of personnel and equipment.**

Where possible following the first peak, a multi-faceted approach was taken to recovery efforts. There was a clear need to clean up the visible damage through the removal and disposal of debris, however the less visible components such as social and economic drivers also required immediate attention.

To that end a number of recovery teams were formed and clear lines of communications with relevant agencies, organisations and government departments established.

A Business Flood Survey was hand delivered throughout the Maryborough business district and an assessment conducted to ascertain the impact on business. This included a business flood register recording the number of businesses (28) that had been affected by the floods.

A flood assistance programme was then put in place, including items such as, but not limited to:

- Fire service wash down teams;
- Placement (and removal) of skip bins to assist in clean up;
- Council trucks to assist businesses move equipment to higher ground; and
- Register of businesses and individuals offering volunteer assistance.

The contribution made within the community itself was great with many businesses and individuals volunteering time, services and provisions to assist with clean-up efforts. Council assisted with the co-ordination of distributing cleaning equipment and materials to affected areas and waived dumping fees for disposal of flood debris.

Educational and awareness information in relation to potential health risks was provided throughout the community by personal contact with Council's Environmental Health & Regulation area, as well as via Council's website and through media outlets.

In addition to the above, the then Chief Executive Officer accompanied myself and Fraser Coast Regional Council communications staff in a helicopter to undertake an air inspection of damage to the region. The then Chief Executive Officer also undertook an inspection of the rural areas by road to determine the extent of damage to our road networks.

**8. Any local measures taken or requested to preserve vital infrastructure and to manage, maintain or reinstate the supply of essential services (water, food, power, transport, communications and/or sewerage) during the 2010/2011 flood events.**

Attachments 1 and 2 provide details of actions taken to protect critical infrastructure. This includes, dependent on the expected flood levels, actions to be taken (e.g. removal of rails from Lamington Bridge) together with contact details for officers responsible for each action.

Council maintained communications with local utilities providers to monitor and minimise the impact to the community due to loss of services. Information received via this method was passed onto the community to manage expectations in relation to the loss and restoration of services.

- 9. Any warning system in place or information received or obtained concerning weather and flood forecasts or warnings, and the steps taken to disseminate that information to the community before, during and immediately after the 2010/2011 flood events.**

Mary River infrastructure includes flood warning devices, river level monitoring and manual river gauges. Council obtains information on predicted flood forecasts and warnings from Bureau of Meteorology updates and notification systems.

Information is disseminated to the community via media releases with regular updates placed on Council's website and recorded messages placed on Council's 1300 number. A diversion facility to the Local Disaster Co-ordination Centre is also activated.

- 10. In relation to Item 9, an indication of the source/s, accuracy and timeliness of that information or effectiveness of the warning system for local purposes.**

The nature of this event was such that the Fraser Coast escalated from a forecasted minor event to a moderate event within a matter of hours due to significant rainfall in the lower catchment area. This rendered the Bureau of Meteorology warning systems as virtually ineffective.

- 11. Any local measures undertaken to protect life and private/public property in connection with the 2010/2011 flood events (such as road/bridge closures, evacuation arrangements, etc), and the steps taken to disseminate information about those measures to the community before, during and immediately after the 2010/2011 flood events.**

Physical monitoring of the Council area by operational crews ensured that road and bridge closures occurred as required. Monitoring of river gauges was conducted on an hourly basis and information from gauge readings provided to the Bureau of Meteorology.

Door knocking of properties expected to be affected also took place and were monitored throughout the course of the event.

Media releases were issued and information placed on Council's website and recorded communications systems.

- 12. The circumstances of any rescues or evacuations performed in the local area in connection with the 2010/2011 flood events, including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof.**

Continued communications with the community throughout the course of the flood event allowed for self evacuations to occur. If required, assistance remained on hand from Council and the SES.

As stated above, door knocking of properties with the potential to be impacted took place and communications systems were updated with recorded messages. Residents requiring medical assistance were evacuated by the Queensland Ambulance Service and medication transfers undertaken by SES river crossing transfers to isolated areas.

The Pacific Haven flood event in December 2010 required the evacuation of an elderly couple from their home. This rescue was managed by the SES and the couple taken to accommodation in the Howard area. The evacuation proceeded without incident.



- 13. The circumstances of the establishment, and subsequent operation and performance, of any Evacuation Centre/s in the local area, including an assessment of any particular difficulties encountered.**

Council did not activate a formal evacuation centre as one was not required by the residents of the area.

Two traveller stops were provided for travellers stranded as a result of the floods and cuts both north and south of the Bruce Highway.

- 14. The circumstances of any flood-related human fatality within the region, including the measures taken to prevent and/or respond to any such fatality, during the 2010/2011 flood events.**

The Fraser Coast did not experience any fatalities during the 2010/2011 flood events.

- 15. Any involvement had with State or Federal agencies, including particularly the Queensland Police Service, in relation to the provision of emergency response measures, personnel, equipment, services or logistical support, together with an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof, during the 2010/2011 flood events.**

All agencies involved with the Local Disaster Management Group and District Disaster Management Group operated in accordance with the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

Due to the extensive flooding that occurred throughout many other parts of Queensland particularly the South East the resupply of food and basic goods to the Fraser Coast Region took 4 days to occur.

- 16. The nature and timing of any communications with the disaster management hierarchy, including particularly any communications had with the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC), the State Disaster Coordinator or the State Recovery Coordinator, and whether any direction/s were given by the DDC and the nature of any such directions.**

Situation reports were provided by the Local Disaster Management Group to the District Disaster Coordinator throughout the event as follows:

- 10:30 am – 8 January 2011
  - 8:15 am – 9 January 2011
  - 1:00 pm – 10 January 2011
  - 2:00pm – 12 January 2011
- A situation report was provided by the District Disaster Management Group to the Local Disaster Management Group at 9:30 am on 9 January 2011.

As the Maryborough District Disaster Co-ordination Centre and the Fraser Coast Local District Co-ordination Centre were co-located at the Moreton Street Council Depot communications between the two groups were seamless throughout the event.

Participation in the State Disaster Coordination Centre Teleconferences as follows:

- 11:00 am – 8 January 2011
- 11:00 am – 9 January 2011
- 11:00 am – 10 January 2011
- 11:00 am – 12 January 2011

A request for assistance was made by the Local Disaster Management Group at 4:59 pm on 10 January 2011 through the District Disaster Coordinator for re-supply of food and basic goods to provide food drops and re-stocking of local shops. This request for assistance was repeated at 12:25 pm on 12 January 2011. The District Disaster Coordinator advised the Local Disaster Management Group at 4:45 pm on the 13 January 2011 that the resupply had been scheduled for the 14 January 2011 during the day.

**17. An assessment of the adequacy of equipment and communications system in the local area during the 2010/2011 flood events.**

The communications system in the local area during the 2010/2011 flood events are considered adequate by the Fraser Coast Regional Council.

**18. An assessment of the adequacy of the community's response in the local area during the 2010/2011 flood events.**

The Fraser Coast community generally responded well to the 2010/2011 flood events with the majority of the community heeding warnings and remaining at home without travelling unnecessarily.

Panic buying did occur in the broader community resulting in shortages of food, staples and personal care items. A lack of preparedness in the isolated areas of Granville and Bidwell resulted in the need for medical supplies, food and personal care items to be transferred by the SES via river crossings in adverse conditions.

The Fraser Coast Regional Council initiated contact with isolated communities on the western side of the Mary River and confirmation of adequate preparations was received from the community.

**19. Any measures being proposed, planned or implemented to prepare for, mitigate or manage future flood events (such as the installation of automatic river gauges, culvert management, levee construction and the like).**

Possible culvert installations have been identified in order to mitigate the impact in the Guava Street area. This work has the potential of providing an additional 5 hours on either side of a flood event at a cost of between \$700,000 - \$800,000.

A review of current flood mapping and notification systems is also underway to identify potential improvements.

**20. Advice as to any special consideration that should be given the local area by reason of particular regional or geographic differences.**

The Fraser Coast is geographically located in a unique position, with the make-up of the region consisting of a combination of coastal, rural and urban centres. The 2010/2011 flood events resulted in a number of road closures within our region, isolating a number of areas within the community.

In particular, the closure of the prime access route between Maryborough and Hervey Bay created significant issues for those living and working in opposite locations. Workers were unable to travel to their place of employment leaving many businesses short staffed.

In addition to the impact of local road closures, the closure of the Bruce Highway from both the north and south of the Fraser Coast heavily impacted supply and distribution of grocery items, in particular staple items and fresh produce. The identification of Maryborough or Hervey Bay as a distribution centre for emergency



supply may have alleviated panic purchasing and allowed for a more sustainable provision of items to the community.

The low socio-economic profile of the Fraser Coast contributed to the lack of preparation by some members of the community who are not in a position to stock high levels of grocery items and were consequently not equipped to live on a day to day basis when in a situation of isolation.

**21. Advice as to any feature of the disaster preparation and planning stages or the disaster response and recovery operations which presented particular difficulty or may require practical or legislative change to improve future disaster management in the local area.**

With respect to inter-governmental communications throughout the course of the flooding incident staff at the Local Disaster Management Co-ordination Centre received the benefit of personal verbal contact with the Bureau of Meteorology. As the disaster expanded across the broader Queensland community and water flowed into the South East corner, however, this contact was limited to email. Whilst it is acknowledged that Queensland as a whole was in the midst of a natural disaster and resources were scarce, this experience has highlighted the benefit that would be gained through access to contacts for each region across the State.

The implementation of accessible State wide flood mapping systems could also benefit all regions impacted as a result of floods flowing from other areas. The ability to read and predict flood levels and potential impacts could greatly assist in the overall management of the implementation of Disaster Management Plans.

Consistent differences were noted between manual and automated gauge height readings for the Mary River. The installation of additional automated rain and river gauge warning systems further upstream would provide a more accurate depiction of mitigation action required, and provide a major benefit with earlier notification of river levels and therefore increased warning and preparation times for the Maryborough area.

As mentioned above, the identification of Maryborough or Hervey Bay as a distribution centre for emergency supply would ensure centralised points that are accessible within the region allowing the continued provision of supplies to members of the Fraser Coast community.

Dated the 5<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2011.

  
**COUNCILLOR SYDNEY MICHAEL KRUGER**  
**MAYOR**  
**FRASER COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL**