

Condamine community meeting – 22 March 2011

Summary of discussion

Background

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry held a community meeting at the Condamine Sports Club. Thirteen residents attended the meeting, including council representatives, local landowners and the local SES leader. The following summary is an overview of the issues raised with Commission staff by Condamine residents. It is not meant to represent the views of the community as a whole.

Issues arising

- Concerns were raised about the early warning system. In some cases, local people only became aware of the extent of the flood threat when power supply was cut off (helicopters arriving in town and cutting supply), rather than by formal warning systems.
- Better gauges were seen as essential for residents of the town to assess their risk of flooding.
- The local SES worked well and was able to activate the community very quickly. However, lack of timely helicopter evacuations was raised (in some cases delayed by several hours). People were concerned about not being able to leave the evacuation point to take their own actions to protect their homes and contents.
- It was highlighted that Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) needed to use local knowledge, including who the SES volunteers were and where were located, as this could improve the emergency response. The importance of debriefing by EMQ soon after the event was also highlighted.
- Mobile phone coverage was already limited, but this was compounded by telephone landlines being cut for up to a month in some cases. Landowners in outlying areas were isolated for very long stretches of time without contact.
- The importance of a finalised disaster plan being in place before the flood was raised (at the time of the flood there was only a draft plan in place).
- Evacuations to Dalby were effected well. The local council was praised for its efforts in attending to the needs of those people who were evacuated. Some questions were raised about where some people were evacuated – people with local ties to Miles could have been evacuated to that town.
- The timing and usefulness of Australian Defence Force personnel and non-government organisations was questioned.
- Emergency housing in the local caravan park was costly when situating caravans on house sites that were no longer flooded could have been more cost effective.
- The imposition of paperwork without adequate explanation in the immediate recovery phase was questioned.
- The need for accurate information about road conditions was highlighted. ABC local radio was seen to be effective source of information about road conditions.
- The timeliness of insurance payments was raised. Many insurance claims had not been paid out some months after the flood event.