



# State Disaster Coordination Centre

Overview  
of  
Activities



July  
to  
December  
2013



QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The cooler months typically result in less severe weather events and this period had even less natural disaster events than normal, which is reflected by having no activation of the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements and no declarations of a Disaster Situation under the provisions of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

Whilst the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) did not formally activate outside normal business hours during this period, the SDCC Watch Desk assisted in numerous minor operations that occurred state-wide.

The national Emergency Alert system was not used to disseminate any voice or SMS warnings during this period, however, a SMS test message was sent to a small area within Kedron, Brisbane on 29 October 201. The purpose of this test was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Location Based Solution across all mobile carriers and proved to be very successful.

There was one visit to the Port of Brisbane by a nuclear powered aircraft carrier from the United States Navy for crew rest and recreation.

There were no resupply operations to remote communities during this period, as Queensland did not experience sufficient rainfall during the start of the 2013-2014 'wet season' to isolate communities for an extended time.

Fortunately, the quieter operational tempo assisted in a high level of scheduled training proceeding without any major disruption. Almost 500 staff from across key government departments attended emergency management training as well as participating in a major exercise that was conducted in October 2014.



## STATE DISASTER COORDINATION CENTRE

The State Disaster Coordination Centre was involved in the following operations during this period: These operations typically required analysis of the event, maintaining situational awareness, passage of information to affected Local Governments and other relevant agencies, tasking of State Emergency Service Groups in response to requests for assistance from the general public, procuring and transporting a wide range of resources that were requested by Local Governments, briefings to key decision makers and forward planning.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Southeast Queensland – 16 September 2013**

Severe thunderstorms including two small unconfirmed tornadoes impacted Peranga, near Oakey resulting in extensive roof damage to two properties. As the storms swept east, the Brisbane suburbs of Keperra and Mitchelton and then Southport also received significant damage from wide spread rain, damaging wind gusts and hail up to 3cm.

Widespread power outages occurred in the areas of Blackbutt, Dalby, Kingaroy and Tarong. The Toowoomba range road was closed due to a landslide.

The SDCC received 52 requests for assistance which were related to roof damage and fallen trees.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Southeast Queensland – 18 October 2013**

Severe thunderstorms during the afternoon producing destructive winds, heavy rain and large hail impacted the Darling Downs area and then Brisbane. A wind gust of 124 km/h was recorded at Oakey, northwest of Toowoomba, and hail larger than 2 cm in diameter fell in the area. Eight homes were damaged by a lightning strike on Brisbane's south-side.

The SDCC Watch Desk received 18 requests for assistance for damage to rooves and fallen trees.

### **State Operations Centre Support – October 2013**

As a result of severe bushfires impacting New South Wales (NSW), the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service received requests for support from NSW and activated the State Operations Centre to coordinate the interstate deployments.

Although the SDCC did not formally activate for this event, it did supply staff to the SOC from 21 to 25 October to assist in Planning, Logistics and Liaison Officer roles.

The SDCC also received an Australian Government request to deploy a senior officer as part of a multi-jurisdictional Emergency Management Assistance Team, to assist the NSW Rural Fire Service with forward planning and coordination activities.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Central & Southeast Queensland – 10 November 2013**

Severe thunderstorms with damaging winds and heavy rainfall impacted central and southeast Queensland during the late afternoon and evening on 10 November. Falling trees and strong winds resulted in power being lost to approximately 15,000 consumers. 2cm hail was reported at Miriam Vale, south of Rockhampton.

The SDCC received 46 requests for assistance, mainly from the Logan area, which were related to roof damage and fallen trees.



### **Severe Thunderstorm Darling Downs – 11 November 2013**

A severe thunderstorm impacted Stanthorpe resulting in the entire 80x40 metre roof of a motel being lifted off by strong winds and 261 rooms suffering water damage. Some roof debris was found lodged 40 metres up a gum tree on the neighbouring golf course. The neighbouring restaurant and all other buildings in the area were undamaged. Some reports indicated it was a tornado but the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) was unable to confirm this. Golf-ball size hail was recorded at Stanthorpe in the early evening. Interestingly, this was the only request for assistance.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Southeast Queensland – 13 November 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing destructive winds of 72km/h impacted the township of Inglewood. There were also reports of large hailstones in the areas Toowoomba, Gatton, Ramsey, Laidley and Minden. Power was lost to over 3,000 consumers and 91 requests for assistance were received that related mainly to roof and window damage.

### **Severe Thunderstorm Wide Bay – 17 November 2013**

During the afternoon of Sunday 17 November 2013, a large storm cell moved through the Wide Bay North area from the south-west, impacting multiple areas within a two hour period. A 7cm piece of hail was confirmed just south of Childers. A direct lightning strike at the Bundaberg bulk supply 132/66kV substation resulted in 43,000 customers across the region having their power supply interrupted.

The SDCC received 93 requests for assistance from Bundaberg to the Gold Coast, with the worst affected area at Maroochy where 44 of the requests came from.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Gold Coast – 18 November 2013**

Severe thunderstorms caused havoc across southeast Queensland during the afternoon particularly in the Gold Coast area. Due to the destructive winds and large hail, the BoM authorised the Standard Emergency Warning Signal to be used by the media when relaying the warnings.

A 139km/h wind gust was observed at Upper Coomera as well as 3-4cm hail and tennis ball size hail was recorded at Maroochy. Power was lost to over 3,000 properties and train lines were affected for a short time. Numerous trees were felled and the SDCC received over 400 requests for assistance, which were mainly for roof damage due to flying debris, hail and strong winds.

### **Severe Thunderstorm Whitsundays – 22 November 2013**

Overnight severe thunderstorms in the Proserpine, Bowen and Hamilton Island areas produced a significant amount of rain in a short period of time, including 225mm at Hamilton Island. Due to the short period of rain there were no significant rises in river gauges in the area, although some flash flooding in low lying areas resulted. The SDCC received eight requests for assistance to assist other response agencies with flood boat operations.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Southeast & North Queensland – 23 November 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing destructive winds and 2cm hail impacted southeast Queensland. Amberley recorded a 95km wind gust and strong winds brought down power lines in Brisbane resulting in outages to over 17,000 consumers. Several flights in and out of the Brisbane Airport were delayed or rescheduled.

Other severe thunderstorms impacted Bowen and produced 220mm rainfall in 70 minutes.

The SDCC received 39 requests for assistance as a result of structural damage to several houses, significant roof loss or damage and trees down on roofs.



### **Severe Thunderstorms Southeast Queensland – 24 November 2013**

Severe thunderstorms impacted mainly the Brisbane, Gold Coast, Logan, Ipswich, Redlands and Scenic Rim area. Golf ball-sized hail damaged some cars at the bay side suburb of Manly and the Sunshine Coast airport recorded a wind gust of 107km/h.

The SDCC received 134 SES requests for assistance, which were predominantly for roof damage. The most significant task was for a retirement village at Wynnum West, where 40 separate units skylights required tarping.

The Sunshine Coast airport recorded a wind gust of 107km/h and the storms also stopped play on day four of the first Ashes Test at the Gabba cricket ground.

### **Tropical Cyclone Alessia – November 2013**

A tropical low developed off the northwest coast of Western Australia on 21 November and intensified to a category 1 Tropical Cyclone named Alessia. As it tracked east it crossed the western coast of the Northern Territory (NT) and weakened back to a low before entering the warm waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria where it reformed back to a cyclone.

The SDCC moved to 'Alert' status on 27 November as it moved closer to the Queensland coastline, however TC Alessia made landfall the next day near the NT/Queensland border and the SDCC stood down.

TC Alessia caused little damage when it made landfall but it did produce heavy rainfall of over 100mm in the local area.

### **AUSASSISTPLAN – November to December 2013**

On 11 November, the Australian Government activated the federal AUSASSISTPLAN to support the humanitarian response by the Philippines Government, following the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan.

The SDCC received two requests to deploy Queensland Health doctors and nurses to Darwin, where Australian Medical Assistance Team were staged before deploying to the Philippines for a two week tour of duty. AUSASSITPLAN reverted to a standby phase on 16 December.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Southeast Queensland – 11 December 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing destructive winds, heavy rain and hail swept across the Southern Downs and then impacted the Gold Coast area. Vines were damaged by marble sized hail at Stanthorpe and Severnlea, and a house lost its roof at nearby Broadwater. Multiple trees were felled by strong winds at Inglewood.

The SDCC received 26 requests for assistance relating to storm damage and fallen trees.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Ipswich – 14 December 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing damaging winds and large hail struck southeast Queensland with the main impact felt at Ipswich which was blanketed by hail. Golf ball sized hail was observed at Mount Barney and 4.5cm hail was seen near Boonah.

The SDCC received 27 requests for assistance due to storm damage which was predominately in the Ipswich area.



### **Severe Thunderstorms North Coast – 27 December 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing strong winds and large hail impacted the North Coast area during the afternoon. Golf ball size hail was reported at Kilcoy. Unfortunately a fisherman was killed by lightning on a beach near Fraser Island.

The SDCC received 19 requests for assistance mainly due to storm damage in the Gympie area.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Sunshine Coast – 29 December 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing damaging winds and hail impacted swept across southeast Queensland although the Sunshine Coast area bore the brunt of them. Widespread power outages occurred resulting in 15,800 consumers losing power.

The SDCC received 13 requests for assistance due to storm related damage.

### **Severe Thunderstorms Central & Southeast Queensland – 30 December 2013**

Severe thunderstorms producing destructive winds and large hail struck a large area with large hail up to golf ball size observed at a number of locations. Later in the evening strong winds removed the roof of a house at Hughenden and a 100km/h wind gust was recorded at May Downs, southwest of Mackay.

The SDCC received 28 requests for assistance due to storm damage and fallen trees mainly between Toowoomba and Logan.

### **Biosecurity Alerts**

During this period the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry advised the SDCC of two new Biosecurity threats that resulted in properties being quarantined. The SDCC monitored and reported on these events, however, no Whole of Government support was required at a State level.

On 19 July 2013 a serious parasitic exotic weed, red witchweed (*Striga asiatica*) was found on a property near Mackay, shortly afterwards it was also found on a small number of other properties in the area.

In late July, Hendra Virus was confirmed in a horse at the Gold Coast **HEarthquakes**

### **Bureau of Meteorology**

During this period 1,744 weather advices were received from the Bureau of Meteorology. 1,192 advices required minimal or no action as they were routine reports such as Coastal Waters Wind Warnings and Tsunami Bulletins.

There were 552 warnings that required monitoring and notification to affected Local Governments by the Watch Desk. These warnings were mainly for Severe Thunderstorms.

### **State Level Resupply Operations**

No resupply operations were undertaken, which is normal during this period as Queensland had not experienced sufficient rainfall this 'wet season' to isolate communities for any extended time.



## **DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no activations of the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) or the State Disaster Relief Arrangements (SDRA) during this period, which is very unusual.

## **NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIPS**

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is the lead agency for coordinating visits by Nuclear Powered Warship visits to Queensland ports. During this period the USS George Washington, a Nimitz class aircraft carrier visited Brisbane from 29 July 2013 to 3 August 2013 for crew rest and recreation purposes. The USS Ohio, a Los Angeles class submarine surfaced off Gladstone for a short time on 30 July 2013 to rendezvous with another vessel to transfer some personnel.

A full deployment exercise was conducted on 12 July 2013 to test emergency response procedures, which involved all emergency services and Queensland Health, Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, Royal Australian Navy, Bureau of Meteorology and the Port of Brisbane Ltd.

The Technical Working Group of the Australian Government's interdepartmental committee the Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear) observed the exercise, as part of the biennial revalidation process for Brisbane.

## **TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACTIVITIES**

The SDCC maintains an active role in organising and conducting disaster management and other relevant training activities at a State level.

As part of their professional development, two staff attended media training, one attended a two-day Community Engagement and Education Officer training course, two attended a 3-day advanced Microsoft Excel course, one completed a Certificate IV course in Training and Assessment and one enrolled on 12-month Certificate IV Frontline Leadership course

## **Exercise Guardian Angel**

The State Disaster Coordination Centre participated in Exercise Guardian Angel on 14, 15, 21 and 22 October 2013. The aim of the exercise was to practice SDCC Whole of Government response teams during a simulated disaster event using relevant SDCC processes and procedures.

The exercise consolidated and validated training that had been conducted earlier in the year. A total of 224 personnel participated in the four 1-day exercises, which consisted of 20 from the Department of Community Safety, 24 from Queensland Police Service and 180 from across other state government agencies.

## **Exercise Hydra**

A staff member actively participated in Exercise Hydra which was conducted by Seqwater on 13 November 2013. The exercise's aim was to practice and validate emergency management arrangements.





## **State Disaster Coordination Centre Response Team**

The SDCC provides Whole of Government coordination to support disaster management operations within Queensland. In order to support the SDCC during protracted events, staff are brought in from across the Queensland public service to fill key positions within the centre for each shift.

Training to Whole of Government staff commences with a mandatory one day induction course which covers Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements. Staff then attend specific training in their preferred Cell, such as Operations, Logistics, Intelligence, Planning or Support. Appropriate staff can also be selected for Team Coordinator, Cell Leader or Mentor training.

During this period, 173 staff attended Induction, 47 Cell Leader, 23 Team Coordinator, 55 Operations Cell, 65 Logistics Cell, 48 Support Cell, 49 Intelligence Cell, 44 Planning Cell, 5 SDCC Liaison Officer and 13 SDCC Manager.

The Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements were also presented to 20 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services personnel attending an Air Support Workshop as well as 75 Queensland Police Service and six Australian Defence Force personnel.

## **STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENTS**

### **Emergency Alert**

Version 4 of the national telephone warning system Emergency Alert was launched by Telstra on 15 October 2013. The key change was that Optus and Vodafone have joined Telstra in having a Location Based Solution (LBS). This allows SMS to be delivered to mobile phones based on their last known position within a specified geographical area. Previously SMS was sent to mobiles based on their billing address.

International tourists will also receive a SMS if they have enabled international roaming and are in the defined warning area.

The recently created Public Safety Business Agency conducted a review of the use of Emergency Alert within Queensland and the associated processes and documentation. The findings indicated that the current processes are robust and provide a clear audit trail.

Following advice from Telstra, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) is seeking to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between QFES and New South Wales. This would formalise cooperative arrangements for mutual assistance by providing a further redundancy measure for issuing Emergency Alert messages within Queensland.

### **Workshop and Conference Contribution**

Two staff attended an Intelligence Workshop at Whyte Island, Brisbane conducted by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service.

One staff member attended a two-day biennial Nuclear Powered Warship (NPW) Seminar in Canberra.

A number of meetings were held with commercial companies that were able to provide a complete and robust emergency management system. This system will replace a number of individual systems and processes that are currently used within the SDCC to provide operational logging, situational awareness and task tracking. It is intended that this system will be operational prior to the 2014-15 cyclone season.



## Committee Contribution

Staff were also actively involved in supporting the following committees:

- Brisbane Port Safety Organisation
- Emergency Alert Steering Committee
- Flood Warning Consultative Committee
- Information Communication Security Change Advisory Board
- Noggin User Reference Group
- Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee
- Operation Claudette (disaster management preparedness)
- Operation Xavier (bushfire preparedness and response)
- State Disaster Coordination Group
- System Change Advisory Board



## OFFICIAL VISITS

Staff hosted official tours of the State Disaster Coordination Centre and gave presentations to the following agencies:

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- Australian Capability Development Sub-Committee
- Brisbane City Council
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Commercial Radio Australia
- Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts
- Emergency Management Australia
- Horizon Housing
- Interdepartmental Committee for Bushfires
- Jakarta Disaster Management Office
- Local Government Association of Queensland
- Lockyer Valley Regional Council
- National Roads and Motorists' Association
- Port of Brisbane Mutual Aid Group
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
- Queensland Health
- Queensland Parliament Delegation
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland University of Technology
- Royal United Services Institute
- Rural Fire Service
- Shanghai Police
- State Emergency Service (3 tours)
- St Patrick's College, Bundaberg
- Sri Lankan Delegation