



Core units: Exemplars – Year 7

Illustration 4: Flooding in south-east Queensland

Extract from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry's report

There is certainly a good deal of room for improvement in planning for emergency response, as the many recommendations in this report and the interim report demonstrate. But this note of caution must be sounded: the disastrous floods which struck south-east Queensland in the week of 10 January 2011 were unprecedented, in many places completely unexpected, and struck at so many points at once that no government could be expected to have the capacity to respond seamlessly and immediately everywhere, and in all ways needed. A great deal can be done to improve readiness to deal with disaster generally, but it is impossible that any government could be permanently ready to come at once to the assistance of everyone needing help in a disaster of that scale and suddenness, unless it were to maintain a standing force of rescue personnel beyond the present capacity of society to fund.

Even a large dam such as Wivenhoe has a limited flood mitigation capacity when the volume of water entering it is significantly larger than its storage capacity. Its flood mitigation effect for Brisbane was further limited by the fact that floodwaters from other parts of the Brisbane River catchment entered the river downstream of the dam, through the Bremer River and the Lockyer Creek. The flooding in Brisbane and Ipswich could, as Mr Babister's study has shown, have been reduced to some degree had the dam had its capacity reduced to 75 per cent prior to the December rains; but to appreciate what the magnitude of the rain would be and that it would fall in the dam area would have required a more than human capacity of prediction. What is concerning, though, is the apparent inertia of government when the possibility was raised.

Source: Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. (March 2012). Preface. *Final report*, p. 30. Retrieved December 2012, from: http://www.floodcommission.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/11698/QFCI-Final-Report-March-2012.pdf

© The State of Queensland 2012.