



Core units: Exemplars – Year 7

Illustration 4: Flooding in south-east Queensland

Too much or too little water?

As the driest inhabited continent on earth, droughts often prevail across Australia. Such extreme shortages of water generally occur over a prolonged period that can last for years. As severe rainfall deficiencies take hold, farmers struggle to feed and water their stock and often are forced to watch their crops wither and die in paddocks. City dwellers notice higher prices in the supermarket, and face water restrictions as town water supplies dwindle. The drying of fuel in forests and grasslands raises the bushfire hazard. It is understandable that many consider droughts to be a most significant natural hazard in Australia.

After a prolonged drought, conditions can quickly switch to the opposite extreme with excessive amounts of rainfall causing major flooding. Whereas the impact of drought builds slowly as the land dries out, floods can cause immediate devastation with whole communities losing everything. With the damage caused to property, infrastructure and the economy, floods have been rated as the most costly natural disasters in Australia's history.