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Policy into practice: Adoption of hazard mitigation measures by local government in Queensland

A collaborative research project between Queensland University of Technology and Emergency Management Queensland in association with Local Government of Queensland Disaster Management Alliance

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POLICY INTO PRACTICE:

ADOPTION OF HAZARD MITIGATION

MEASURES BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN

QUEENSLAND

A collaborative research project between Queensland University of Technology and Emergency Management Queensland

in association with the

Local Government of Queensland Disaster Management Alliance

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FINAL REPORT
JULY, 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local Governments have significant and considerable responsibilities if they are to comply with contemporary Disaster Management (DM) policy and adopt relevant guidelines. It requires their taking an all-hazards, comprehensive approach in DM planning, education, operational aspects, coordination, and importantly, maintaining a continuity of Council services through an emergency or disaster. In addition to the routine constraints of Local Governments in addressing their responsibilities, including resourcing and the need for prioritisation of activities, the situation in Queensland has been further complicated by the amalgamation of many Councils across the state in 2008.

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), as part of the "Disaster Management Alliance" with the Department of Emergency Services (DES) - (now the Department of Community Safety (DCS)) -, has attempted to assist local Councils to integrate DM into their planning and operations through its publication "*Incorporating Disaster Management into Local Government Corporate Planning Practices – a practical guide for corporate planners*" (2008). The DCS does this also through the State Planning Policy SPP 1/03, the Operational Planning Guidelines for Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) and the Queensland Disaster Management Planning Guidelines for Local Government 2005, which also aim to integrate DM into day to day Council business.

The focus of the present research was to investigate how Local Governments in Queensland were progressing with the adoption of delineated DM policies and supporting guidelines. The study consulted Local Government representatives and hence, the results reflect their views on these issues. Is adoption occurring? To what degree? Are policies and guidelines being effectively implemented so that the objective of a safer, more resilient community is being achieved? If not, what are the current barriers to achieving this, and can recommendations be made to overcome these barriers? These questions defined the basis on which the present study was designed and the survey tools developed.

While it was recognised that LGAQ and Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) may have differing views on some reported issues, it was beyond the scope of the present study to canvass those views.

The study resolved to document and analyse these questions under the broad themes of:

- Building community capacity (notably via community awareness).
- Council operationalisation of DM.
- Regional partnerships (in mitigation/adaptation).

Data was collected via a survey tool comprising two components:

- An online questionnaire survey distributed via the LGAQ Disaster Management Alliance (hereafter referred to as the "Alliance") to DM sections of all Queensland Local Government Councils; and
- a series of focus groups with selected Queensland Councils

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations is a synthesis of commonly and/or strongly emphasised points made by participants in both the online survey and focus groups. Incorporated in these are the Council-nominated requests, raised at focus group meetings, in responses to the final question: "*What is your vision for improvement (in DM) and strategies to achieve it in the future*?"

The recommendations are organised under the three major themes of the study.

A. BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

1. In general, the State and National DM bodies should investigate ways to provide further assistance, incentives and coordination to local Councils to develop systematic strategies to promote a "prepared community model".

Modifying Public Expectations

2. Greater promotion to the public of the concept of an imperative to sustain 3-4 day self sufficiency within the community.

3. Clearer specification to the public of what emergency relief and help is likely to be available, when and to whom, in response and recovery situations (i.e. to assist members of the public to understand their responsibilities, and decrease the chances of inequitable treatment). This information should be reinforced by consistently applied policy.

Improving Educational Systems

4. Improved State-wide coordination and consistency of awareness/education campaigns in a structure that involves Local Government in advisory, editorial and dissemination roles. Hazard/risk awareness and educational information from the State or Emergency Management Australia (EMA) should be channelled through Councils to the community so that it can be synthesized appropriately, properly targeted, and contextualised for local circumstances. Public awareness should be systematically assessed as part of this system as a guide to program development and strategies.

5. Consideration be given to a greater role in DM education for Education Queensland (EQ) to deliver consistent but locally-contextualised DM curricula.

Increasing Direct Public Engagement

6. Where there are communities at high risk, the State should consider providing further support to Councils to facilitate targeted community meetings.

7. Opportunities for public involvement in the DM planning process be further investigated.

Risk Communication Guidelines

8. A specific guideline be developed in the area of risk communication both in regard to the public communications and across State and Local Government organisations.

B. OPERATISIONALISATION OF DM

Support for consistency and competency in DM

9. Better support to Local Government to achieve State-wide consistency in DM competencies through meeting some staffing & resourcing costs.

10. Employ at least one dedicated full-time DM officer in each Local Government Council.

Reinforcing the DM System and the Comprehensive Approach

11. In general, the State needs to review its current effectiveness in coordinating DM, and the degree to which its activities are consistent with a comprehensive, all-hazards approach to DM.

12. In regard to the above, a program approach (a structured, objective approach) should be emphasized through the DM system State-wide. For example, greater effort should be made to ensure that groups such as the LDMGs and the District Disaster Management Groups (DDMGs) are driven by systematic processes rather than being "personality-driven".

13. Groups such as the LDMG and DDMG need to recognise the roles they play and utilise the mechanisms associated with their structures to achieve better DM function. In terms of the DM system as a whole, a Local Government perception of a prevailing "top-down" culture in Queensland should be addressed.

14. Prevention and preparedness (mitigation and adaptation elements) should be consistently and clearly included with response and recovery in DM exercises, policy and operational priorities and funding. This is needed to help temper the current perception of Local Government as having just an "operational emphasis" at State level.

15. Greater State resourcing of prevention and preparedness at the local level should be considered to back LDMGs and Councils pursuance of comprehensive, all hazard approaches.

16. Notably in a "response" situation, greater understanding at the State level of the available capacities of individual local Councils is desired, with State intervention adjusted accordingly.

Facilitating Local Actioning of Policy/Guidelines

17. The precise role of regional EMQ officers needs to be clarified and evaluated from the viewpoint of their interactions with Local Government, the LDMG, the DDMG and the district-level stakeholders

18. Earlier and more comprehensive consultation is required between the State and Local Government in assessing the real need for new policy and guidelines and in the subsequent development of these.

19. Greater recognition is needed from the State that Councils often lack the resources and expertise to interpret general DM frameworks, then to research and develop local DM plans and comply with State requirements.

20. In specifying lead times for policy/guideline actioning, the State needs to better appreciate that for most Councils, even larger ones, application and integration may take one-to-two years, or even as long as a decade to fully achieve.

21. Similarly, the State should be more sensitive to Council budget cycles when designing funding/grant schemes and subsequent compliance requirements.

22. EMQ at the regional level could take on a specific role to provide technical assistance, in particular, to Councils implementing guidelines and policy.

23. Alternatively, a professional emergency services group (in addition to regional EMQ) could be established to manage and advise on DM activities - specifically advising on policy guidelines and providing technical support.

Clarifying Protocols and Boundaries Regarding the State Emergency Services (SES)

24. Effect improved relationships between Local Government, EMQ and SES. There is some reported disharmony over the relative roles, responsibilities, reporting protocols and resourcing of these groups, resulting in problematical relationship dynamics in some areas. The State could consider taking over the SES to overcome such problems.

Data Building

25. Establishment of a State-wide database of local resources and expertise. This could be a project coordinated by the Alliance and facilitated by regional EMQ.

26. Development of a protocol and resourcing to collect and maintain key community data (e.g. demographic, vulnerability, facilities, infrastructure), contacts and risk profiles, managed at the State level to ensure consistency and currency.

27. Councils to be assisted by the State and other relevant authorities to capture, maintain and share spatially-referenced, high-resolution risk data (e.g. at property level).

Improving the Response to Transboundary Issues

28. The State needs to acknowledge that DM does not stop at administrative/political borders. Local Governments require support for taking cross-border perspectives of DM, particularly in relation to State borders.

29. Mechanisms need to be established to ensure consistency of DM policy and operations across Disaster Districts (DDs), particularly when there is more than one DD within a Local Government boundary.

Integrating DM and Land Use Planning/Building Codes

30. With regard to land use planning and DM, consideration should be given to an overall policy stating that any new developments should not place extra burdens on DM.

31. Clarification and action (if required) is needed regarding the liability of local Councils if they make changes to development controls/codes in order to manage risk. Mechanisms to protect Councils in such circumstances should be investigated.

32. Policy concerning cyclone shelters could be re-visited to reconsider the rigorous standards currently in place and the consequent inability to retrofit existing structures.

C. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Facilitating Information Exchange and Partnership Development

33. The role of regional EMQ officers be clarified in terms of technical assistance (as mentioned previously), and an expansion of responsibilities be considered to include greater facilitation of "bottom-up" communications from Local Government to the State and of regional Council partnerships.

34. Support (e.g. data sharing and networking opportunities) be given to Councils to continue furthering existing arrangements with neighbouring Councils and to develop new regional partnerships. Local Governments prefer to negotiate and implement such partnerships from their level rather than through formal State frameworks.

35. To facilitate information sharing across the State, establish one central website, (possibly in EMQ), which contains the DM plans of all Councils in Queensland, as well as brief descriptions of relevant legislation relating to DM.

36. Further to the above, the database could contain DM contacts at Local Government and regional level, again to facilitate interactions between Councils, at the local/regional level.

Responses to the LGAQ Alliance

37. The LGAQ Alliance needs to have a greater local presence and be more visible on the ground.

38. Possible roles for the LGAQ Alliance might include: a clearer and stronger advocate for local Councils in taking issues forward to EMQ generally; facilitating more regular regional meetings to effect the above; facilitating consultation at the time of State guideline development; providing guidance on the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs); establishing and maintaining a database of DM contacts and basic information from across the State to assist Councils who are seeking collaboration, information exchange etc. from other Councils/agencies.
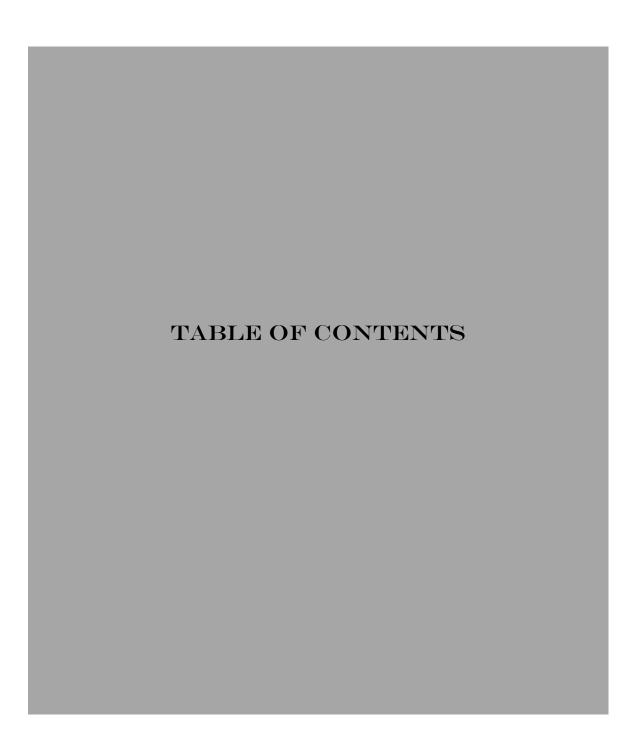
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRENDS AND THEMES IN THE ONLINE SURVEY DATA

FOCUS GROUPS

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Alliance	Queensland Disaster Management Alliance
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
DD	Disaster District
DSC	Department of Community Safety
DDMG	District Disaster Management Group
DoTARS	Department of Transport and Regional Services
DM	Disaster Management
EMA	Emergency Management Australia
EMQ	Emergency Management Queensland
EQ	Education Queensland
IID	Institute for International Development
LDMG	Local Disaster Management Group
LDMP	Local Disaster Management Plan
LG	Local Government
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PPRR	Prevention, Preparation, Response, Recovery
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SDMP	State Disaster Management Plan
SMEC	Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

BACKGROUND

TO THE

STUDY

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Governments and DM

In Australia, all levels of government are responsible for DM under a tiered "all agencies" approach. The tiered structure of Queensland's DM arrangements – involving State, District and Local levels - "*enables a progressive escalation of support and assistance through each tier as required*". (Queensland Government, 2008, p.11)

The State Disaster Management Plan (2008) and the earlier Queensland Disaster Management Act (2003), define responsibilities and arrangements at Local, District and State levels. At State level, the State Disaster Management Group, supported by EMQ (a division of the Queensland DSC) is the peak policy and planning group for DM across the State. It coordinates the whole-of- government response and recovery prior to, during and after an event when called upon to do so. Featuring at State level are the State Disaster Coordination Groups - responsible for the development and implementation of DM plans, education and awareness, and coordination of State assistance - and the State Mitigation Committee (advising on mitigation issues). There is also a major incidents group.

Below State level is a Disaster District Level (DD) level and DDMG which performs a 'middle management' function, providing coordination for State-level support when requested by Local government. Its membership usually includes representation from the State Group, State Government departments/agencies and Local Government. EMQ maintains a DD-level presence.

Below DD level is Local Government. The focus of the present research is at this level. Local Government's specific roles and responsibilities under Queensland's DM arrangements are described in the following section.

Local Government Roles in DM

In Queensland, the responsibilities of Local Government (i.e. Local Councils) are specifically defined (at the time of the present study) by the State Disaster Management Plan (2008) and the Queensland Disaster Management Act (2003). The State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP) describes Local Government as "*the key management agency for disaster events at local level*" (State Disaster Management Plan 2008). The responsibilities are considerable, and are reproduced below from these two documents:

Under the SDMP (2008), Local Government responsibilities include:

- Maintenance of Local Government functions (via Local Government business continuity and recovery planning).

- Maintenance of normal Local Government services to the community and critical infrastructure protection.

- Development and maintenance of DM plans for the shire – Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP).

- Development and maintenance of public education/awareness programs.

- Establishment, maintenance and operation of a Local Disaster Coordination Centre including the training of sufficient personnel to operate the Centre.

- Coordination of support to emergency response agencies.

- Maintenance of warning and telemetry systems.

- Collection and interpretation of information from telemetry systems.

- Reconnaissance and post impact assessments for the shire.

- Debris clearance of roads and bridges.

- Issuance of public information prior to, during and post impact disaster events.

- Recommendations with regard to areas to be considered for authorised evacuation.

- Public advice with regard to voluntary evacuation.

- Evacuation centre management.

- Provision of locally based community recovery services in conjunction with other recovery agencies.

Under the Queensland Disaster Management Act (2003), Local Government is required to:

- Ensure it has a disaster response capability.

- Approve its local DM plan.

- Ensure information flow to the District level.

The local Mayor or representative is also required to chair a LDMG. This Group, which is part of a hierarchical structure of DM groups (the others being at District and State levels), also has specifically defined functions according to the State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP). These include:

- Ensuring consistency of DM and disaster operations with State policy.

- Developing effective DM and reviewing/assessing/managing disaster operations as designated by the State Group.

- Assisting Local Government in developing the DM plan.

- Providing advice to the DDMG on support and operations.

- Ensuring that the community is aware of ways of mitigating the adverse effects of an event, and preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a disaster.

- Identifying and coordinating the use of resources.

- Establishing and reviewing communications systems across Groups and in a disaster.

- Ensuring risk management and contingency arrangements of continuity of essential and community services within the Local Government area.

In addition to the above Plan and Act (and their associated documents), several other relevant policies and documents affect or potentially affect DM at the local level. Among these is the State Planning Policy 1/03 (2003) that sets out State policy for land use planning in the context of bushfire, flood and landslide risk. Various coastal management policies and plans (e.g. The State Coastal Management Plan – Queensland's Coastal Policy, 2002 – currently under review) can similarly be relevant in relation to coastal hazards. Building codes, development standards and hence land use planning are linked to the above policies, with these commonly administered and enforced by local Queensland Councils.

Most recently, the Federal Government has pursued its National Disaster Resilience Strategy through a National Community Engagement Action Plan (in draft at the time of the present study). This document emphasizes, among its goals, one of creating greater resilience in Australia by enhancing "*self reliance*" - that is, by creating empowered, risk-aware individuals and communities, along with facilitating the development of partnerships in Local Government, underpinned by effective leadership, communication and management (see EMA, 2009). Queensland's SDMP similarly advocates a **"*prepared community*"** characterised by alert, informed and active community members, community organizations and Local Government engaged with DM, and organizations and communities able to cooperatively respond to emergencies and assist in recovery (Queensland Government, 2008).

In summary, Local Governments have significant and considerable responsibilities if they are to comply with contemporary DM policy and adopt relevant guidelines. This requires their involvement in DM planning, education, operational aspects, coordination, and importantly, maintaining a continuity of Council services through an emergency/ disaster – that is, they are responsible for various activities across the range of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). Capacity in terms of access to, and

effective management of, information, resources and expertise is implied. In addition to the routine constraints of Local Governments in addressing their responsibilities, including resourcing and their need to prioritise activities, the situation in Queensland has been further complicated by the amalgamation of many Councils across the State in 2008.

LGAQ as part of the Alliance with DES (now DSC) has attempted to assist local Councils to integrate DM into their planning and operations through its booklet "*Incorporating Disaster Management into Local Government Corporate Planning Practices – a practical guide for corporate planners*". The Alliance hence works to facilitate exchanges between the Local and State-department levels and assist Local Governments to improve their capacities for disaster planning, risk management, response, recovery, assessment and training.

The emerging questions are - how are Local Governments progressing with the adoption of the above-mentioned, over-arching DM policies and supporting guidelines? Is adoption occurring? To what degree? Are policies and guidelines being efficiently and effectively adopted so that the objective of a safer, more resilient community is being achieved? If not, what are the current barriers to achieving this, and are there solutions from the perspective of Local Government?

The general aim of this study is to investigate these questions for Queensland Local Governments (i.e. Councils).

Previous Surveys of DM in Local Government

Several recent Australian initiatives, featuring surveys of Local Governments, have sought to document and investigate emergency/DM activities at the Local Government level. Key documents include:

- *National Local Government Emergency Management Survey*,
  Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and Australian Local
  Government Association (ALGA) Final Report, March 2007.

- *Disaster Management Needs Analysis*, Disaster Management Alliance (Alliance)
  (LGAQ, DES Queensland), March 2006,

- *Local Government Land Use Planning and Risk Mitigation*. National Research
  Paper Prepared for the ALGA by the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation
  (SMEC) and Institute for International Development (IID), December 2006.

These studies, each in their particular research context, identified issues concerning emergency/DM by Local Governments (two of these studies were conducted nationally). In some cases, specific recommendations were made. A selection of these issues and recommendations, augmented by additional research-specific objectives developed in consultation with EMQ and LGAQ, defined the basis on which the present study was designed and the survey tools developed.

Table 1 summarises previous survey outcomes from the above-mentioned studies that were of interest to the present study. These are organised under the broad, interrelated headings of:

- Building community capacity (notably via community awareness).
- Council operationalisation of DM (including community involvement in DM).
- Regional partnerships (in mitigation/adaptation).

This basic structure was adopted across the current study.

The studies identified the need to:
- enhance and assess public awareness of risk and DM/ preparedness and to ensure access to the information needed by the public to facilitate their own understanding and management of risk;
- promote the integration of DM across the range of Local Government management activities, including land use planning – and empowering communities to participate in DM; and
- encourage and enable effective regional partnerships to enhance collaboration and consistency in DM.

Table 1. Selected results from previous survey research into emergency/DM at the Local Government level – key observations, recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

Building Community Capacity (notably via community awareness & responsibility).
SMEC & IID (2006): - **"area in need of improvement"** - *Increased community awareness and understanding of risk mitigation and the need for land use planning controls to reduce community vulnerability to hazards and disasters.* - **SMEC & IID (Recommendation 35 from DoTARS 2004) -** in the context of discussions of eligibility for funding, SMEC suggested that criteria should include: *the 'community right to know' (about the risks affecting any given community). State, Territory and local governments must ensure that all available information on flood risk and their communities is accessible to the public.*

Alliance (2006) (from recommendations):

- *The Disaster Management Alliance should work collaboratively to develop a structured, state-sponsored program to enhance public awareness and preparedness at local and regional levels in support of Councils.*

- *The Disaster Management Alliance should develop a capability to assess public awareness and preparedness for inclusion in Council's DM program.*

RMIT & ALGA (2007):

- *Local communities were not seen by respondents to be particularly well prepared for an emergency (p.12).*

- **"conclusion"** - *Community engagement roles were seen as very important and community attitudes to be very supportive, yet community education activities and availability to support community preparation and response were seen as infrequent or poor.*

Council Operationalisation of DM

Alliance (2006) (from recommendations):

- *The Disaster Management Alliance should develop a capability to assess public awareness and preparedness for inclusion in Council's DM program.*

- *LGAQ (Local Government Association of Queensland) to take the lead in developing and implementing a program for local governments that enables them to effectively incorporate disaster management requirements into their Corporate, Operational and Annual Budget cycles.*

SMEC & IID (2006):

- **suggestion 8** - *Increased community awareness and understanding of risk mitigation and the need for land use planning controls to reduce community vulnerability.*

- *Empowering communities to speak up about these (DM) issues will not only increase their understanding of land use planning as it applies to risk mitigation, but also enable them to understand the responsibility individuals have in reducing the level of risk to which their community is exposed – Communities need to understand the importance of their own involvement in risk mitigation (p.59).*

- *Where there is a high capacity for local governments to manage risks through land use planning controls, some participants suggested that there should be a greater focus on community safety within the local government agenda (p.54).*

Regional Partnerships

SMEC & IID (2006):

- **"area in need of improvement" -** *Investigation into "why and how" successful state/territory and local government partnerships are established to develop strategies for renewed collaboration and to encourage more supportive relationships.*

- **"area of improvement"** - *Increased support to develop regional partnerships to encourage efficiencies and more consistent approaches in land use planning controls.*

Alliance (2006) (from recommendations):

- *The Alliance should continue to pursue regionally based partnerships between councils with an emphasis on partnering for mitigation…shall seek to integrate with Disaster District structures…*

THE PRESENT STUDY

SCOPE AND AIMS

THE PRESENT STUDY – SCOPE AND AIMS

The present study aims to identify and analyse issues related to the adoption of DM policies and guidelines (dominantly from State level) by Local Governments. Specifically, the research questions address if and how Councils are undertaking their required roles and responsibilities in regard to DM, and if not, what are the barriers to doing so. Therefore, the study provides an informed account of the current status and progress towards achieving adoption by Local Governments of State-level DM policy/guidelines, and explores further issues considered of strategic value in promoting better DM in this context. Apart from those issues being raised by Councils themselves, choices regarding the latter were guided from consultation with EMQ and the Alliance - and generally concerned a desire to map *if and how* Local Governments were operationalising current policy and guidelines into their activities. The study consulted Local Government representatives and hence, the results reflect their views on these issues. While it is recognized that LGAQ and EMQ may have differing views on some reported issues, it was beyond the scope of the present study to canvass those views.

Study aims are hence resolved to document and analyse the following for a range of individual Queensland Councils (the term "Council" will be generally used in preference to "Local Government"):

Local Context

- the profile and prioritisation of DM in local Councils
- the expertise and experience of DM available within Councils

Building Community Capacity (notably via community awareness and responsibility)

- Councils' support for, and progress towards, a "prepared community model" for DM/community self-reliance
- progress by Councils in assessing and facilitating public awareness of risks and DM
- levels of access to data/information by Councils and the wider community

Council Operationalisation of DM

- status and review of protocols for DM planning/plan
- the degree to which DM has been integrated across all Council functions and planning
- issues in translating policies (State, Federal) and guidelines to local/regional application
- public participation in DM planning
- local policy, coordination, resourcing and community support for DM
- the integration of DM and land-use planning, specifically

Regional Partnerships

- barriers and/or current practices or initiatives in developing regional partnerships in DM;
- the nature of partnerships in terms of information exchange and other types of cooperation;
- the impacts of Queensland Council amalgamations on DM; and
- the effectiveness of the DM Alliance.

Council- nominated Issues and Discussions

- Other issues raised by Councils in "open-ended" question formats as being relevant to their ability to achieve satisfactory DM outcomes. (This includes critical comment on current State DM policy, structure and support).
- "Vision" for the future of DM, from a Queensland Council perspective.

METHOD

Information and data collection was achieved using a survey tool comprising two components:

- An online questionnaire survey.
- A series of focus groups with selected Queensland local Councils.

The Online Survey

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with the LGAQ and EMQ. It included both closed and open format questions offering considerable scope for respondents to elaborate on their views and raise further issues. The online survey was piloted by two local Councils in July 2009 and reviewed to produce the final survey form (see Appendix 3).

A list of strategic contacts in all Queensland Local Government Councils was supplied by the Alliance to enable wide distribution of invitations to participate in the study. The online survey was conducted between August and November, 2009. Council officers were able to access the survey individually and provide password-protected responses. In some cases several respondents from one Council completed the survey resulting in a total of 64 responses received. The participating Councils are listed in Appendix 1. A Council response rate of 66% was achieved with at least one representation from 48 of the 72 local Councils in Queensland completing the survey. (See Appendix 2 - Map).

The Focus Groups

Four coastal and two inland Councils were selected in consultation with LGAQ/EMQ, and in consideration of time and resource constraints of the project, for the purpose of conducting in-depth focus group meetings with Council-based DM stakeholders.

These Councils were contacted directly by the researchers and invited to nominate focus-group participants relevant to their DM. The researchers aimed to negotiate attendance (where applicable) by at least the DM controller, other DM operatives, a land use planner, corporate administrator/manager and elected representative (councillor). This was generally achieved. Focus groups were provided with an outline of the topics to be covered to allow them an opportunity to formulate responses prior to the meeting.

The focus group meetings were conducted with six (6) Councils between October and December 2009 as follows.

- Oct. 1   Rockhampton
- Oct. 12   Gold Coast
- Nov.5   Mackay
- Nov.9   Murweh, Charleville
- Nov.18   Central Highlands, Emerald
- Dec.4   Cairns

Participants were sent discussion questions in advance with the aim of obtaining rich local data on themes examined in the online survey and in accordance with project aims.

Focus group themes (see Appendix 4) were:

1. Policy adoption/guideline documents
2. Public role in DM
3. Amalgamation/regional partnerships
4. Climate change issues and DM
5. Vision for improvement and strategies to achieve it in future

Data collection from the focus groups was achieved by attendance of at least two (most often three) members of the research team at each focus group meeting. Data was recorded via note-taking, followed by de-briefing of the research team and consolidation of notes into a summary account. This account was then returned to Council participants for validation.

Results from both the online survey and focus groups were analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative methods.

RESULTS

ONLINE SURVEY

RESULTS - ONLINE SURVEY

Results from the online survey are presented below in the order of the questionnaire sections.

Explanation of Results Databases

In some cases there were multiple responses to the online survey received from a single Council. Therefore the researchers have built and strategically used two databases – the first containing only one response per Council and the second containing all responses received. These are outlined below. The text and/or graphics in the report indicate the database from which the reported results were derived.

One-response-per-Council database: In this database, one survey response represents each Council. Where multiple responses were received from a single Council, the response from the disaster manager/most senior manager specifically delegated to DM was selected. These officers usually identified themselves as such in the initial section of the online questionnaire. The researchers used this database primarily to investigate critical areas of policy and DM where the selected respondent could reasonably be assumed to be articulating Council's "official" position from an informed and responsible viewpoint. In several items, however, the researchers were reluctant to artificially generate a "consensus" Council response where multiple responses were received, and viewpoints differed. Unless otherwise stated, quoted statistics are from the "one-response-per-Council" database.

All responses database: This database includes all responses received from the online survey, including multiple respondents from the same Council. In cases where comments were sought on more general aspects, this database was consulted to maximise the sample and diversity of opinion/knowledge.

In some cases (as indicated below) the "all responses" database was used, but edited so that the same point (e.g. in an open-ended 'further comments' style question) was not counted more than once for any single Council. For example, if two people from the same Council responded to the survey, and they made the same point in responding to an item, that point was only counted once. This was to avoid potential distortions particularly in the frequency counts of results, and hence allowed for more straight-forward interpretation of the data.

Any other variations in the collation of data are noted in the text or on the figures.

SECTION 1. LOCAL CONTEXT: Profile of DM in Council.

The first section of the survey was focused on eliciting information to provide a profile, in terms of staffing and experience, of the DM section within Councils. Where appropriate, in this section statistics from the "all responses" database have been reported to give as clear a picture as possible of the range of expertise available within Councils.

1. Professional Background, Responsibility and Local Disaster Experience

The professional background of DM staff was heavily weighted towards Local Government administration (50) and engineering (33), with the next highest representations being in the Planning and Social Work fields (Fig. 1).
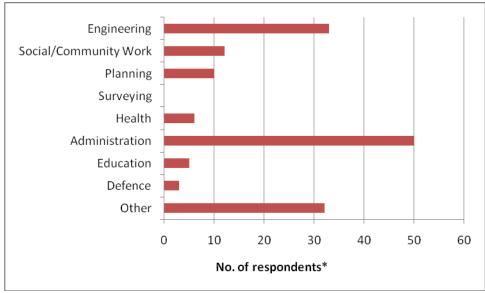
Figure 1. (Q1a). What is your professional background?

*all responses database

In addition, many DM officers mentioned previous experience in the SES. The "other" category also included qualifications and backgrounds in law, business, accounting, media and marketing.

As far as identifying ultimate responsibility for DM within Councils (Q2), many respondents made a distinction between the Chair of the DM committee (usually the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer of Council) and the person who had an actual "hands on" or coordination role in DM (Table 2). Several respondents identified the whole DM team as having overall responsibility.

Table 2. (Q2). Who is responsible for DM in your Council?

Locus of Ultimate Responsibility	No. of Respondents *
Mayor / CEO of Council	23
Engineer	3
DM Team	7
DM coordinator	14
Director, other branches of Council (e.g. Corporate Services, Technical Services)	9

*all responses database

The location of the DM function within Councils was spread over a great range of Council sections and branches (Table 3). This situation highlights the diffusion of DM activities and responsibilities within Local Government in Queensland and may contribute to difficulties in addressing policy matters.

Table 3. (Q3). Name the section of your Council in which the DM function is located and/or coordinated.

Location of DM function	No. of Respondents *
Engineering	5
Administration	6
Corporate services	11
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) branch	8
Community safety and disaster	2
Community and cultural services	3
Technical services	2
Strategic asset planning	1
Disaster coordination	2
Land office	1
Roads and infrastructure	4
Environment and community law	1
DM/EM unit	3
Customer services	1

*one-response-per-Council

In answer to a question asking which hazards were of primary concern to Councils (Fig. 2), three respondents simply listed up to 15 hazard types and/or mentioned the "all hazards" approach – "*we adopt all hazard planning*". Thus, in these cases no specific hazard types were prioritised. Responses to this question would undoubtedly have been influenced by recent events in each local area. The most significant hazard of concern, however, was overwhelmingly flooding, followed by bushfire then severe storm and cyclone (tropical cyclones Hamish 2009 and Larry 2006). Interestingly, only 3 respondents mentioned drought, with one respondent commenting that "*this is not regarded as a natural event by State Government*".
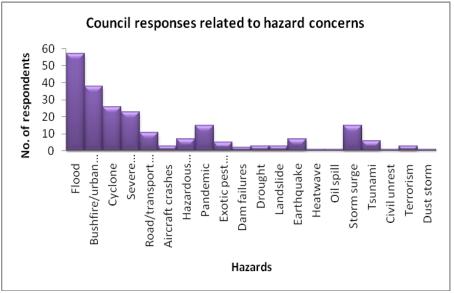
Figure 2. (Q4). What type of hazard is your Council primarily concerned with?

Council responses related to hazard concerns

*all responses database

Local experience of disaster events was heavily skewed to the recent past of 2008-2009 with events in these years being identified by forty-four (44) respondents (Table 4). Only six (6) respondents answered that their most recent disaster experience was prior to five years ago.

Table 4. (Q5). What was the most recent disaster experience in your Council area? When was this?

Year of most recent disaster	No. of respondents *
2009	30
2008	14
2007	3
2006	4
2005	0
Before 2005	6

*all responses database

2. Professional Training in DM

A very strong level of interest and engagement with DM training was evident with 90% of respondents reporting that they had participated in DM workshops, conferences and professional development over many years (Table 5), indicating a high degree of commitment to the professionalism of the field of DM.

Table 5. (Q6a). Have you participated in any DM training, workshops, conferences, professional development?

Yes	No *
58 (90%)	6 (10%)

*all responses database

It is worth noting that three out of the six respondents who answered "no" to this question were located in coastal regions, not in the most remote Councils of Queensland, so distance from urban centres was not a problem. It may be that these officers were new in their roles.

The types of training that respondents perceived as essential for effective DM ranged from seminars and presentations in the local Council area to State and interstate-sponsored activities. The vast majority of respondents had attended sessions at the local or Brisbane disaster coordination centres, and had gained formal certificates in various aspects of DM through EMQ regional workshops and courses run by the EMA at Mt. Macedon, Victoria.

In terms of the type of training that respondents perceived as important for DM officers (Q7), the following skill areas were most commonly cited:

- Local knowledge and experience
- Field operational experience
- Legislative requirements of DM
- Risk management
- Communication skills
- Public safety and evacuation procedures
- Hazardous materials management

There was a strong view that regular attendance at workshops and courses to "keep up to date and share information" was essential. Although most respondents felt that formal qualifications for DM were desirable, some expressed a view that they were not required but that "*short courses, workshops are very useful for sharing knowledge, templates and ideas*". There was a recognition that a variety of skills were needed for effective DM at the local level, so Councils often spread tasks over a number of officers who have part-time roles in DM. There was also an understanding of the role of the media in disaster response by some respondents:

"*Communication training for all officers involved in managing and responding to disasters – this is critical as the flow of information and statistics to the media is vital to helping managing public opinion about the response effort*".

Some respondents called for formal qualifications in DM at the tertiary level incorporating a wide range of DM aspects:

"I would like to see a Graduate Certificate or Diploma in Disaster and Emergency Management… If no such qualification I think an undergraduate degree is necessary".

It is worth noting here that this is a misconception since such courses already do exist at some Queensland Universities.

SECTION 2. BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

1. DM Policy

Survey results reflect moderate levels of policy adoption by Councils.

Twenty-six (26) Councils reported having a formal policy for disaster mitigation (Q8a). Twenty (20), however, specifically indicated that they did not. The researchers suggest that "policy" was interpreted by respondents as manifest in either policy and/or a DM plan. The recency of policy was also elicited - results presented in Table 6. Eighteen (18) Councils reported that the latest version of their policy was two years old or less at the time of the survey (2007-2009). Seven (7) Councils reported that policy development or review was "currently" underway.

Table 6. (Q8b). When was the latest version (of disaster mitigation policy) adopted?

Year	No. of Councils*
2009	8
2008	8
2007	2
2006	1
2005	3
2002	1
Under review/ development	7
	Total Councils responding = 30

* one-response-per-Council database with comments from Banana, Gympie & Hinchinbrook added from the "all responses" database.

In an open-ended question format, survey participants were asked to comment on the effectiveness of any Council DM policy in supporting local planning and/or operation (Q8c), (Table 7). The majority of responding Councils reflected positively in this context, although only thirty-three (33) Councils responded. Three (3) Councils were critical overall of policy effectiveness or adequacy. Several Councils reported that their policies were presently under review and this was commonly attributed to Council amalgamations.

Table 7. (Q8c). Please comment on the effectiveness of any Council DM policy in supporting local planning and/or operation.

Comment Category	Number of Comments*
Effective/ very effective/ strong support	13
Linked to the Corporate Plan/ Operational Plans/ Budget	7
Under review/amalgamation issues	7
Need for practical application of DM policy/policy to be more practical	4
Descriptive comment (e.g. "*essential to have*")	4
Effective to define roles/allocation of resources	3
Not/ less than effective or adequate	2
Have informal planning/arrangements	1
Critical of DM policy/politics	1
	Total comments classified = 42 Total Councils responding = 33

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council.
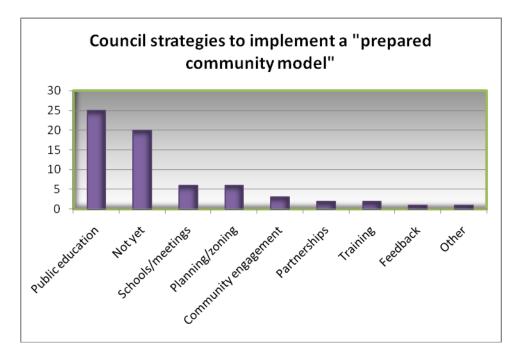
2. Prepared Community Model

The survey results suggest broad support by Councils for the general public taking greater personal responsibility for managing their risks and building community resilience (Q9). Forty-six (46) of the responding forty-eight (48) Councils, i.e. 96 per cent, either moderately, strongly or very strongly supported the proposal; "*strongly support*" being the modal response at 54%.

When asked in an open-ended question format if their Council had identified strategies to implement a prepared community model, respondents most frequently described efforts at public education via channels including pamphlets, the media, and the web (Q10) (Fig. 3). Information disseminated typically describes risks and appropriate responses for the public. Fewer responses referred to interactive communication forms such as school and public meetings. Notable, however, were the twenty (20) responses suggesting that a strategy is not yet in place, despite the above-stated support for the approach.

More sophisticated strategies conveyed included the formal establishment of community education advisory groups. At the other end of the spectrum, one Council stated that it was not familiar with the "prepared community model".

Figure 3. (Q10). Has your Council identified strategies to implement a "prepared community model"? Please describe these strategies.

Council strategies to implement a "prepared community model"

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council.

3. Sharing Hazard or Risk Information

Survey participants were asked to specify the Council's and the general public's access to hazard and risk information (Q11), including:

- Descriptions (i.e.) text of local hazards and/or risks.
- Maps of hazard incidence/events (in the past).
- More detailed maps showing risk levels and likelihoods of hazards.
- Risk/likelihood at individual property level.

The researchers were interested to establish the availability of data, particularly to the public, given the previously stated support by Councils of a prepared community model. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. (Q11). What hazard and/or risk information is held by and/or available to your Council? Within this, what is available to the general public?

		Descriptions i.e. text of local hazards and/or risks	Maps of hazard incidence/ events (in the past)	More detailed maps showing risk levels and likelihood of hazards	Risk/likelihood at individual property level
Availability to Council	Not accessible/ available	1	9	9	18
	Accessible to Council	6	2	7	5
	Held by Council	11	11	7	7
	Owned by Council	27	20	19	12
Availability to General Public	No	3	13	17	21
	Yes on request	23	24	17	16
	Yes public	20	5	9	5

* One-response-per-Council" database.

Not surprisingly, the more detailed the information, the less accessible/available it is to both Councils and the general public. Perhaps most significantly, risk information at individual property level is said to be unavailable in eighteen (18) of the responding Councils (42 per cent of Councils responding to that item). This resolution of risk information is similarly not available to the general public in twenty-one (21) of the responding Councils (50 percent of Councils responding to this item). Seventeen (17) Councils report that "more detailed" maps showing risk levels and likelihoods of hazards were not available to the general public. Nevertheless, it is noted that information for each category is available to the public directly or by request in at least half of the Councils responding, and usually more.

The researchers sought further comment on data availability and accessibility via an open-ended item. Comments are categorised and collated in Table 9. In many cases, respondents simply described the information they had – hazard studies, Q 100 levels and the like. Nine (9) Councils alluded to either currently-or-planning to improve data accessibility or risk management through dedicated studies and/or reviews of DM plans. A small number of Councils raised the problem of costs and/or resourcing as a barrier to better data being available.

Table 9. (Q11e). What hazard and/or risk information is held by and/or available to your Council? Within this, what is available to the general public? Comments on risk information.

Comment Category	Number of Comments*
Currently or planning to improve (data or accessibility or risk management)	9
Descriptions of hazard information held	9
Map/data available on the web/net	6
Information/pamphlets available or distributed to the public	6
Cost/resourcing barriers to better data or its provision	4
Needs action	2
Data is held but not released to the public or held in DM plans	2
Data (high res.) is available on request	1
Not confident enough in the data to release to the public	1
	Total comments classified = 40 Total Councils responding = 30

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council.

4. Comments on Public Awareness

A series of three open-ended items aimed to elicit Councils' attempts to:

- assess public awareness of risks/hazards and preparedness for disasters;
- improve awareness of hazards/risks and DM; and
- engage the community in promoting self-reliance.

Tables 10 and 11 and fig.4 present the categorised responses.

Table 10. (Q12). By what means has the Council attempted to assess public awareness of hazards and/or risk/or preparedness for disaster events?

Comment	No. of Councils*
No assessment (stated)/ "no"	16
Assessment evident	12
Forums/workshops/direct contact with public (possible assessment)	8
Provision of information/education only	5
DM planning (not specified)	3
Assumed/inherent knowledge	2
Invited input into planning/consultation	1
Assessment planned	1
	Total Councils responding = 48

* one-response-per-Council database

One-third of responding Councils stated that they had not assessed public awareness. In the other cases, however, there was evidence that assessments had been undertaken (or were likely to have been) across a range of sophistication. In at least twenty (20) Councils (out of a total of 48), there was evidence from the comments that knowledge and/or perceptions of the general public had been gathered, even if relatively informally or unsystematically. Community meetings, forums and the like were accepted by the researchers as probable conduits to information gathering about community perceptions/ knowledge.

 A small number of Councils had systematically surveyed the community to gather information, although one commented that the community did not embrace their survey and response rates were poor. This Council has subsequently reviewed its survey design and is making another attempt.

One Council reflected that collecting community perceptions/knowledge was not its priority, following a Council amalgamation.

> *"... we have just started to formalise the disaster management process (after amalgamation). Cart before horse really, concentrating on response capacity first, and will address other issues later."*
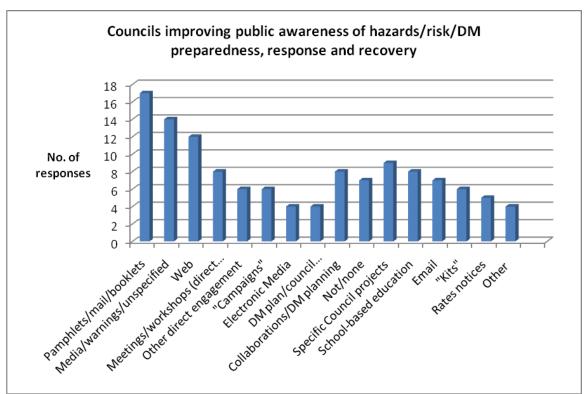
Figure 4. (Q13). How is your Council attempting to improve public awareness of hazards and/or risk and DM (preparedness, response and recovery) in your local community?

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council.

Responses to this item (Q13) were similar to those that previously addressed efforts to promote a community preparedness model. Information extension via printed materials, booklets, other public media, the web and meetings/workshops were the prominent means to enhance community awareness. Information tailoring for individuals/ properties was mentioned by one large Council as a goal. Four (4) Councils pointed to their efforts to establish specific groups to facilitate education/feedback for DM. For example -

> *"Community meetings in 'high risk' areas – provides for a degree of community participation in problem-solving and planning issues'.*

Integration into schools/curricula was specifically mentioned by three (3) Councils. A small number of Councils pointed to the difficulties in pursuing awareness programs, such as: accessing remote locations; dealing with wide population distribution; contrasting regional cohorts; and new problems resulting from amalgamation and resourcing/prioritisation.

> *"Population is diverse and geographically spread which makes this somewhat difficult"*
> *"We support SES programs but now have no resources to increase public awareness"*
> *"The amalgamation… has meant the using up of most resources!"*

Three (3) Councils stated that they had no plan/strategy to improve public awareness.

The subsequent open-ended item (Q14) more specifically enquired about engagement strategies in order to elicit more focused comments on this topic. While some responses were similar to those of the previous two items, there was more evidence of interactive public engagement – particularly engagement in public meetings, with community/DM-related organizations and as part of the DM planning process. Strategies mentioned by Councils are included in Table 15. Noteworthy is that eleven (11) Councils stated they did not have strategies for community engagement.

Table 11. (Q14). What community engagement strategies does your Council use to promote community self-reliance?

Comment category	Number of Comments*
Information provision (media, pamphlets etc.)	21
Direct engagement via public meetings/ organisations/ DM planning processes	16
None	11
Web/email	4
Other promotion (unspecified)	2
Some Specific strategies - hazard/risk info for individual properties; coordination across agencies; mapping - Communicating that people need to look after themselves - Establish Local DM groups/ SES - Community involvement in DM meetings - Establish disaster response groups - Promote the SES	
	Total comments classified = 54 Total Councils responding = 44

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council.

SECTION 3.   COUNCIL OPERATIONALISATION OF DM

1. DM Planning

Table 12 (based on responses to Q16) shows how often Councils review their DM plans (and therefore the number having such a plan). By far, most Councils claimed to be reviewing their DM plans annually, in line with State policy expectations. Several also commented that in addition they review their DM plans after a major event.

The researchers noted that when asked specifically about DM plans (as compared to DM policies), it was apparent that more Councils have a DM plan than was suggested by previous results. Inconsistency with the previous data may reflect issues with question semantics.

Table 12. (Q16). How often do you review your DM plan?

Time Period	No. of Councils*
6 months	2
1 year	29
2 year	3
3 year	1
4-5 year	1
Ongoing	4
Other/ unspecified	2
Currently under revision	4
	Total Councils responding = 47

* one-response-per-Council database

In regard to how Councils maintain their DM plan, forty-two (42) of the responding forty-eight (48) Councils nominated that this was done via internal Council capability. Six (6) Councils employed consultants for the task (Q15).

The sophistication of DM planning in the context of Council operations was examined by asking Councils whether they had internal plans/arrangements to support their operations during a disaster and their roles and responsibilities under the their DM plan (Q17a). In responding to a closed-format ("yes", "no") item, a majority of thirty (30) Councils nominated that they had such plans/arrangements; eighteen (18) nominated that they did not. Greater resolution of these data was achieved by seeking further comment via an open-ended question format (Q17b) (Table 13). Here, twenty-three (23) of the forty (40) Councils responding specifically referred to having a business continuity plan either in place (10) or under review/development. Most others alluded to plans or procedures that they felt addressed the issue. Only four (4) Councils specifically answered that they were yet to address their business continuity plan or similarly targeted arrangements.

Table 13. (Q17b). Does your Council currently have an internal plan (or arrangements) to support normal Council operations during a disaster as well as providing support for Council's roles and responsibilities under the Local DM Plan?

Comment category	No. of Councils*
Business Continuity Plan (BCP) being developed/ reviewed	13
BCP	10
BCP to be addressed	4
Plan linking Council activities/ procedures/processes/ operations	5
Standard Operating Procedures	3
Other	4
Included in DM plan	1
	Total Councils responding = 40

* one-response-per-Council database

Further comments revealed a range of complexities, from extensive and integrated procedures for large, populous Councils through to more informal (but deemed by Councils to be effective) arrangements. As a recurring theme, three (3) Councils mentioned Council amalgamation as affecting their plans/planning. Access to resourcing and expertise to develop such plans was also raised as an issue, but not frequently. Overall, extended comments reflected clear recognition by most Councils of the importance of continuity planning and that effort had been afforded to the issue.

In the context of agencies and governments promoting greater involvement of the community and the general public in managing their risks, the researchers were keen to map the current participation of the public in DM planning processes, at least at the Local Government level (Q18, Q19). Fig. 5 and Table 14 display data derived from the closed and open-ended items.
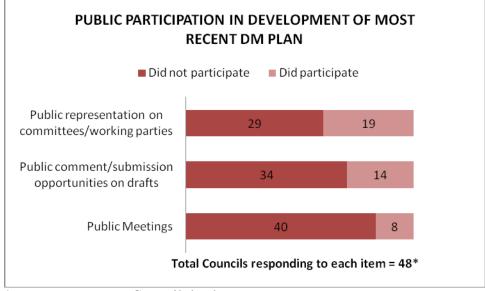
Overall, direct public participation in the planning process is moderate. Some participation is acknowledged in the areas of representation on committees and opportunities to comment. Most Councils do not use public meetings as a forum for public input in the DM planning process.

From the extended comments, only relatively few Councils seek to actively engage the public at the planning stage of DM management development (Fig. 5). Of interest are comments from several Councils that they perceive the public to be disinterested or apathetic towards contributing to DM. This resulted from a lack response to invitations by some Councils to participate/comment on DM matters.

A small number of responding Councils (5) stated that they saw DM as a Council rather than a community responsibility and hence favoured a top-down process – for example,

> *"... this is a high level of strategic planning & public comment not considered necessary".*

Figure 5. (Q18). How did the public participate in the development of your most recent DM plan? (closed item)

Figure 5. (Q18). How did the public participate in the development of your most recent DM plan? (closed item)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF MOST RECENT DM PLAN

■ Did not participate   ■ Did participate

	Did not participate	Did participate
Public representation on committees/working parties	29	19
Public comment/submission opportunities on drafts	34	14
Public Meetings	40	8

Total Councils responding to each item = 48*

* one-response-per-Council database

Table 14. (Q18d). Public participation in the development of DM plans (comments).

Comment category	No. of Councils*
Outreach/ engagement (meetings; plan on web; contacted stakeholders – comments invited)	13
No comments received from public/public apathy perceived	7
Not considered necessary/not invited/no consultation	5
Invited comments from specific stakeholders/ committee membership	5
Information relayed to public, but no consultation	1
Other	6
	Total Councils responding = 37

* one-response-per-Council database

Two additional items completed this suite. Open-ended format questions asked about strategies to increase community engagement in the DM planning process (Q19) (Table 15), and the problems in achieving increased community engagement in the process (Q20) (Fig. 6).

Twenty-four (24) of the responding forty-three (43) commented that they had no strategy as yet to increase community engagement in the DM planning process. A comparatively small number of Councils were moving towards greater interaction via workshops and community reference groups. Several Councils, in fact, viewed the prospect of greater community involvement negatively:

> *"they don't really care until something happens… they are becoming over consulted…"*
> *"too many personal agendas bogged the process down…"*
> *"counter productive".*

Table 15. (Q19). Do you have any strategies to increase community engagement in the DM planning process?

Comment category	Number of Comments*
No/None	24
Workshops/active engagement	8
Education/media/publicity	7
Develop community groups/reference groups	4
Under consideration	1
Other	11
	Total comments classified = 55
	Total Councils responding = 43

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council
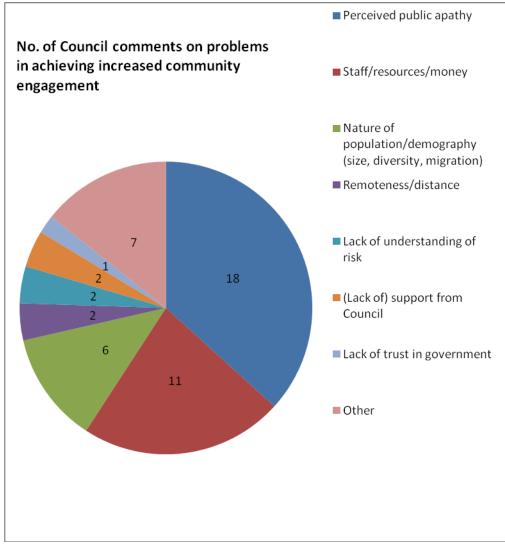
Figure 6. (Q20). What are the problems in achieving increased community engagement as above?

No. of Council comments on problems in achieving increased community engagement

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council

Continuing this theme, Fig. 6 reveals that perceived public apathy (towards involvement in DM planning) was cited relatively frequently by survey respondents as a barrier to greater public engagement. As observed in previous responses, some Councils have attempted to involve the public in DM without the desired success. The familiar resourcing/staffing issues and population geography/demography issues were next most frequently mentioned. Specific comments further resolve these categories:

> *"new residents lack knowledge"*
>
> *"older demographic and population growth"*
>
> *"... high number of people moving in from southern areas who have little understanding of the optional impacts..."*

"a level of cynicism of the increasing number of public processes and an
   assumption that the Council will look after it for them"
"it is a Council, not a community strategy"

2. Incorporation of DM Requirements

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which DM requirements were incorporated into Council plans/planning more generally (Q21). Table 16 displays the results from the closed-format question. Table 17 summarises the further comments.

Table 16. (Q21). How well are DM requirements incorporated into the following?

	Very well incorporated	Satisfactorily incorporated	Limited incorporation	Very limited/not specifically acknowledged	Total responding*
Council Corporate Plan	13	30	2	3	48
Community/ Local Plan	8	12	12	16	48
Council Operational Plan	12	30	2	4	48
Planning Scheme (land use planning)	8	24	10	6	48
Master Plans	3	20	9	12	44
Annual Budget Process	7	31	5	5	48

* one-response-per-Council database

Table 17. (Q21g). How well are DM requirements incorporated into the following –
comment on how DM is incorporated.

Comment category	Number of Comments*
Across Council activities/high priority	8
Funding/resource constraints affecting incorporation	5
Lack community or other plans	3
Appropriate resources are allocated	3
Have necessary plans	2
Have dedicated staff/unit	1
Under development	1
Other	6
	Total comments classified = 29 Total Councils responding = 28

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council

A range of further comments were submitted, many specific to the local situation as
reflected above. Notable comments included:

> *"… adopted a budget which included a…levy…to assist in funding DM initiatives".*

> *"DM is not important to Council, so it is not adequately funded or supported institutionally".*

> *"… a high level of support for DM which is incorporated into daily planning and operations".*

> *"… we have a strong desire to regionalise our DM approach".*

3. Present "Status" of DM in Councils – Closed Format Items

In order to gauge the overall status and momentum of DM in Councils, participants were
asked to state how their Council's circumstances have changed over the past three years
in the context of DM; then how satisfactory they considered the current situation to be
(Q22).

Overwhelmingly, Councils claimed that their circumstances regarding DM had either
stayed about the same (16 Councils) or improved (29 Councils) over the past three years.
Only three (3) Councils felt that their situation had deteriorated. Many Councils were
not, however, complacent. Thirty-four (34) felt that their situation needed a level of
improvement; twenty-eight (28) some improvement; and six (6) substantial improvement.

A battery of closed-format items sought to further resolve Councils' current situation regarding DM (Q22c-Q22s) (Table 18).

Though not an overwhelming majority, more Councils than not were satisfied with their political will and support for DM within their Councils, communication and engagement with DES, and support for regional DM partnerships and planning consistency. It was noted that in the cases of the latter two categories, however, only about half of the responding Councils nominated satisfaction. In general, therefore, most Councils perceived that improvement was needed across most of the areas listed in the question.

Councils most often expressed that "substantial improvement" was needed in the general area of resources (funds, time, skilled personnel etc.) and particularly access to external funding for DM activities. "Some improvement" needed was more frequently suggested for availability of skilled personnel, availability of local information/data, and other resourcing. The researchers also noted that local community will in supporting DM, and community engagement were relatively frequently identified as needing some improvement.

Results relating to communication/engagement with EMQ/DES were weighted towards satisfaction, while those concerning clarity of (State) government policies and integration of approaches at the various levels of government were less positive on balance.

Overall, results were wide-ranging, likely reflecting the contextual diversity of individual Councils. In general, it appears that while there is local will to support DM, resourcing, and particularly access to external funding are defining barriers to DM. Several of the above-mentioned themes will be further analysed using the additional data from the focus groups.

Table 18. (Q22). With regard to your Council's current situation, please comment on the following areas.

	Needs substantial improve-ment	Needs some improve-ment	Is satisfactory	Total responding *
Policy				
Council support for DM	1	18	29	48
Integration of hazard and DM across the range of Council functions (where desirable)	6	23	18	47
Clarity of State government policies/guidelines and their application (e.g. SPP103)	9	19	19	47

Coordination				
Availability of relevant local information/data (including spatial data)	4	29	14	47
Availability of relevant local information/data from external sources (e.g. State and Federal agencies)	8	23	16	47
Integration of Local, State and Federal DM approaches	11	20	16	47
Communication / engagement with EMQ/DES	9	13	25	47
Resources				
Availability of skilled personnel (i.e. in planning/risk management/ analysis)	7	30	10	47
Staffing allocation to DM planning/ exercises	9	23	15	47
Time allocation for DM planning/ exercises	10	23	14	47
Funding allocation for DM planning/exercises	13	22	12	47
Other resourcing for DM planning (equipment, GIS, training, surveying etc.)	10	26	11	47
Access to external funding beyond usual Council revenue streams for DM activities	23	18	6	47
Community Support for DM				
Local political will & consistency in supporting DM	5	11	31	47
Support for regional DM partnerships & planning consistency	5	18	23	46
Local community will in supporting DM	7	25	15	47
Community engagement	9	27	11	47

* one-response-per-Council database

Fifteen (15) Councils provided further comment on this item. Some notable individual contributions included:

- resource constraint- related comments;
- that the Queensland government does not resource EMQ to set up the correct structure to provide leadership/develop DM;
- lack of support from local officials/low priority in the region;
- an observation that some are not aware of the DM system; and
- suggestions of structural change.

One comment seemed to summarise a sense gained by the researchers in viewing the results holistically. That is, some Councils felt that current State policies were placing increasing responsibilities onto them, but it was Local Government that was "picking up shortfalls" in effecting policy – i.e. more resources/support were needed from the State.

Another Council called for the revitalisation of the SES to improve community support in developing response strategies.

4.   Land Use Planning Controls

The researchers were particularly interested in describing the degree to which DM has been genuinely integrated into the processes of land use planning. Table 19 presents the results of a closed-format question addressing this aspect (Q23).

Table 19. (Q23). What types of land use planning controls are in place in your Council to reduce community vulnerability to hazards?

	Yes	No	Total responding*
Buffer zones (e.g. for bushfires)	34	11	45
Restrictions on building in hazardous areas	40	5	45
Land-use zoning appropriate to hazards risk (e.g. sports fields on floodplains)	41	3	44
Raising floor levels of buildings and/or rezoning following a significant event	33	12	45
Strategic location of critical infrastructure (e.g. hospitals, schools, emergency services, evacuation routes	31	14	45
Adaption/enforcement of building design codes for other hazards (e.g. wind, slope, fire)	34	11	45
Buy-back/acquisition policy for high risk properties	7	38	45

* one-response-per-Council database

The vast majority of Councils reported that they had restrictions on building in hazardous areas and/or land-use zoning appropriate to hazard risk. Other more specific controls were less evident. Nevertheless, for each of these measures/controls, well over half of the responding Councils had them in place. The one exception to this related to having an acquisition policy for at-risk properties.

Nineteen (19) Councils provided further comment, which was generally descriptive of their own zoning schemes, thresholds, use of hazard overlays and their stated compliance with the Queensland development codes/policies and the like.

A further, notable theme emerged from the comments of several Councils. This alluded to their control (lack of) over the location of State infrastructure and the resulting inconsistencies with local planning schemes and/or subsequent exposure of this infrastructure to risks that are locally acknowledged.

Again, several of the above-mentioned themes will be further analysed using the additional data from the focus groups.

5. LGAQ/Alliance Publication

Finally in this section, reaction was sought to the LGAQ/Alliance publication that attempts to assist local Councils to integrate DM across their Council business (Q24b). Table 20 displays the results.

Table 20. (24b). How useful have you found the document '*Incorporating Disaster Management into Local Government Corporate Planning Practices, A practical Guide for Corporate Planners"*? (LGAQ 30/1/08)

Comment category	Number of Comments*
Use/reference	5
Don't use	3
Unaware of it	2
LGAQ is supportive	1
Needs more promotion	1
Other	1
	Total comments classified = 13 Total Councils responding = 13

* all responses database with no "double counting" within a Council

Few comments were gained specifically on the publication, but these were generally positive, with particular mention made of the usefulness of the document in corporate plan development.

SECTION 4. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND AMALGAMATIONS

Section 4 of the survey focused on the question of how recent (2008) Council amalgamations had affected DM planning and procedures and regional partnerships. A total of twenty-eight (28) of the responding Councils were amalgamated and twenty (20)

were not amalgamated. The survey provided separate questions for the amalgamated and non-amalgamated Councils. Results are presented here under the two headings.

1. Amalgamated Councils

The first set of questions related to changes or support needed to overcome barriers to integrating DM planning and functions within the newly-amalgamated Councils.

Table 21. (Q26). What change or support is required to overcome any barriers to integrating DM planning and operations across newly amalgamated Councils?

Type of change /support needed	No of Councils*
None	7
Additional DM staff	3
Clarification of responsibilities for DM	5
More funding from State EMQ	12
Statutory regional plan	2

* all responses database

Funding for additional DM developments, not surprisingly was seen as a critical issue.

e.g. "*More political, resource, personnel and funding support is required across the board.*"

Several Council representatives mentioned difficulties in addressing the diverse DM needs of their new jurisdictions which now incorporates both coastal and inland Councils.

e.g. "*Our area incorporates…400 km from the coast westward. A one size fits all approach will not work due to the diversity of isolated urban communities and the distances involved*".

As far as specific impacts from amalgamation on DM functions in Councils (Q27), the weighting seems to have been more on the negative side than the positive with some notable exceptions.

Table 22. (Q27). Have there been any important or specific impacts on DM planning and capacity (both positive and negative) as a result of Council amalgamations?

Positive comments	Negative comments
More coordination, less duplication (3)	*New Council boundaries do not align well with DM areas (1)*
Now have a full-time DM officer (2)	*Increased burden – same resources for larger area (4)*
Improved capabilities with combined workforce (6)	*Increased financial burden (2)*
Additional resources available to smaller Councils (2)	*Not enough staff to do the job properly (3)*
	Confusion over structures and responsibilities (1)
	With centralisation of functions, poorly re-sourced sub-centres have been created (1)
	Loss of knowledgeable staff from sub-regions (i.e. previous Councils) (3)
	Downgrading of DM priorities in new Council – more negative approach in some sections of new Council (3)

Eight (8) respondents felt that there were no impacts evident. As with the perception of changes needed to overcome barriers, most negative comments related to lack of funding and staffing.

Table 23. (Q28). What specific areas of disaster and/or risk management have you integrated across the amalgamated Council - i.e. internally?

	Already Integrated	**Yet to be Integrated**	**Do not Anticipate Integration**	**Not Known**		**No. Councils Responding**
Hazard mapping	9	12	2	2		25
Risk modelling	7	14	1	1		23
Information/data sharing	22	2	0	0		24
Sharing staff, expertise, knowledge and technical assistance	22	2	0	0		24
Joint submissions for funding	17	5	0	1		23
Consistent and standardised approaches to dealing with risks	16	7	0	1		24
Consistent approaches in land use planning controls	7	16	0	1		24
Resource sharing to interpret and apply State policy	17	4	0	3		24
Collaborative links with Queensland government departments	19	5	0	0		24
Joint training, exercises and the like	17	6	1	0		23
Community engagement programs/ strategies	11	10	0	2		23

Table 24. (Q29). Have you developed any specific areas of disaster and/or risk management collaboration with other Councils? (i.e. external to your now amalgamated Council).

	Yes	No		No. Councils Responding
Hazard mapping	3	22		25
Risk modelling	4	21		25
Data sharing	7	18		25
Sharing staff, expertise, knowledge & technical assistance	15	10		25
Joint submissions for funding	4	21		25
Consistent and standardised approaches to dealing with risk	4	20		24
Support for District DM planning	6	18		24
Consistent approaches in land use planning controls	1	23		24
Resource sharing to interpret and apply State policy	3	21		24
Collaborative links with Queensland Government departments	5	18		23
Joint training, exercises and the like	5	19		24
Community engagement programs/ strategies	4	19		23

A majority of respondents commenting on their situation prior to amalgamation (Q30) and (Q31) reported some degree of collaboration at the regional level with neighbouring Councils, many of which are now part of their newly amalgamated Council. These arrangements ranged from regular informal information-sharing meetings to collaborative projects funded by the National Disaster Mitigation Program. This, again, emphasised the general coincidence of interests and strong preference for DM links and operations at the regional level.

Time and resources (funding and staff) were the only real barriers mentioned by respondents to the development of regional DM partnerships. Councils did suggest ways in which partnerships could be facilitated. These will be reported and discussed later.

2. **Non-Amalgamated Councils** - (total of twenty (20) responding Councils are not amalgamated).

Ten (10) out of the twenty (20) non-amalgamated Councils reported that they had developed DM partnerships with other Councils. In all cases these partnerships were with neighbouring regional Councils.

Table 25. (Q33). Has your Council developed any DM partnerships (with other Councils)?

	Yes	No	No. Councils Responding
Hazard mapping	3	16	19
Risk modelling	3	18	21
Data sharing	6	14	20
Sharing staff, expertise, knowledge & technical assistance	7	13	20
Joint submissions for funding	6	13	19
Consistent and standardised approaches to dealing with risk	4	16	20
Support for District DM planning	6	14	20
Consistent approaches in land use planning controls	4	16	20
Resource sharing to interpret and apply State policy	2	18	20
Collaborative links with Queensland Government departments	3	17	20
Joint training, exercises and the like	7	13	20
Community engagement programs/strategies	2	18	20

As with the amalgamated Councils, time, resources and distance were the major barriers mentioned by respondents to the development of regional DM partnerships. In addition, different political agendas can impede progress and decision-making. Some respondents saw no need to develop formal processes, commenting that "*we work well together as and when required*".

SECTION 5.   SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DM
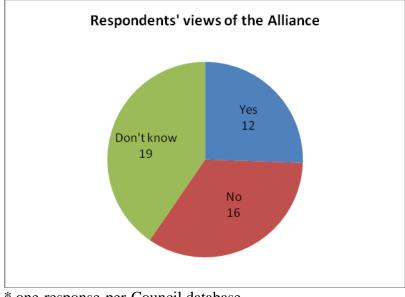
The final section of the online survey related to Council perceptions of the LGAQ-EMQ Alliance and the level of support received by Local Government from the State. Two additional questions were included relating to the location of evacuation centres.

Councils had the chance in this section to raise other DM issues and elaborate on previous answers. Unless otherwise indicated the 'all responses database' was used.

1.   The LGAQ-EMQ "Disaster Management Alliance"

Most Council representatives (forty-two (42) out of forty-eight (48) respondents) were aware of the LGAQ-EMQ Alliance (Q37). There was much less certainty, however, as to the effectiveness of the Alliance.

Figure 7. (Q38). Do you believe that the LGAQ-EMQ Alliance has achieved its objective of increasing DM capacity and capability within Queensland Councils?

Respondents' views of the Alliance

Yes 12

No 16

Don't know 19

* one-response-per-Council database

While open-ended responses indicated that respondents were generally supportive of the idea of having an LGAQ-EMQ Alliance, there seemed to be a significant level of confusion concerning its role, and disappointment with its effectiveness. More negative comments about the Alliance were received than positive.

Table 26. (Q39). Comments on the Alliance effectiveness

Positive comments	Negative comments
DM conference in Emerald in 2009 was successful and useful (2)	Effective at higher levels but not adequate at regional or local levels (3)
Council works well with regional EMQ officers (2)	Not working – EMQ controls resources but expects Councils to bear financial burden (2)
Good source of strategic information (1)	No useful information obtained from Alliance (7)
Alliance has assisted in making Councils more aware of the importance of DM (1)	LGAQ representative is funded by EMQ, so cannot challenge EMQ effectively (1)
	Alliance appears to concentrate on SEQ (1)
	Not enough focus on policy development rather than response (2)

Examples of comments:

"*The fact that EMQ was developing MOUs with individual Councils and not a standard document for all at the State level is an example of the failure*".

"*Unfortunately it has not been successful in highlighting the lack of policy development productivity from the State Government*".

"*The current response focus of EMQ is a major stumbling block to comprehensive disaster management*".

2. Support for DM from the State

Lengthy responses were received to Q40, *What support does your Council need to help improve community self-reliance and resilience in the context of DM*?

There was strong agreement that there was a need to increase self-reliance and resilience in local communities. As with many other questions relating to support, Councils identified additional resources (funding and additional staff) to be the major priority in order to make improvements in public awareness and building community resilience capacity. Suggestions for the type of support needed were as follows:

- Resources - funding and staff (26 comments)
  "*Easily accessible funding without strings to complete plans as required by the State is essential*".

- Information (written pamphlets, etc) to distribute to communities (15)
  "*Standard information/templates for media releases and letter box drops.*"

- More Education programs and marketing from State (15)
  "*Information on community self-reliance and resilience which can be distributed to the communities e.g. generic information/education programs (we don't want to reinvent the wheel)*".

- Greater role from State in public awareness raising (7)
   "*We need State-wide advertising to make the public aware that in a natural disaster they have to be able to look after themselves for at least 3 to 5 days*".

  "*Advertising funding would be helpful*".

- More cooperation between State and Local Government (7)
  "*We have not historically viewed this as a Council responsibility; the State has never been clear on this point, but the State seems to be quite inactive in this area*".

- Increasing SES numbers and clarifying roles of SES (5)

> "*Issues associated with management of the SES desperately need to be addressed*".

- More training opportunities for staff in communication (3)
  "*Funding to run workshops in the community*".

- More recognition by elected MPs of the importance of DM (1)

There was a recognition of the differences that exist between urban and rural communities in terms of resilience:

"*Most rural and small communities are very self-reliant and resilient when they are faced with a major disaster. The communities pull together in these times and are quite OK in the long run.*"

In terms of support for encouraging further regional DM partnerships (Q41), strong views were expressed that EMQ/State needed to be more proactive in fostering such partnerships. Beyond this, more funding was again identified as being necessary to achieve anything further. Other suggestions put forward for assisting in developing regional partnerships in DM included:

- greater role for the Alliance in assisting to develop regional partnerships
- more workshops (online or face-to face) as opportunities for information sharing
- development of a database of Local Government expertise & resources in neighbouring Councils.

Amalgamated Councils were not so concerned with future regional partnerships because for the most part, they reported that they were already engaged in regional arrangements and partnerships with former neighbouring Councils which were now "in-house".

3. Evacuation Centres

The first of two questions relating to evacuation centres was as follows:

Q42 Have you identified specific sites for evacuation centres as part of your DM plan?

- Yes – 39
- No – 7

Respondents were then asked to comment on location and readiness of the evacuation centres. It was clear that there was confusion over the terms *"evacuation centre", "evacuation shelter",* "cyclone shelter" and "recovery centre". Furthermore, there was considerable concern expressed about the new State definition of "evacuation shelter" which appears to mean that virtually no current evacuation centres in the State now comply with the new criteria.

Comments included:

- *Most "evacuation centres" are currently in schools or community halls.*
- *Many thought to be "satisfactory".*
- *Few are located in hazard-free zones.*
- *Need to distinguish between "evacuation centre" , "evacuation shelter"/ "cyclone shelter"/"recovery centre".*
- *Only one approved cyclone shelter in the State.*
- *Many under construction/under review.*

COMMENTS ON THE SURVEY

Finally, respondents were asked if there were any areas not covered in the survey which they felt should have been (Q44). Comments received include:

- *Not enough on management of SES – cause of greatest disharmony between State & Local Government.*
- *Consultation about moves to have EMQ take over DDs instead of Police.*
- *Report from Cyclone Larry still not released.*
- *More on evacuation centres.*
- *More on mitigation plans & strategies.*

TRENDS AND THEMES

IN THE ONLINE

SURVEY DATA

TRENDS AND THEMES IN THE ONLINE SURVEY DATA

Prominent themes are presented here in terms of the familiar study structure:

- Local Context
- Building Community Capacity (notably via community awareness and responsibility)
- Council Operationalisation of DM
- Regional Partnerships

This section briefly highlights and summarizes prominent trends and themes in the data relevant to the original study aims. For further resolution regarding particular aspects of the study, readers are urged to review the results section.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The location of the DM function within Councils was spread over a great range of Council sections, branches and professions (see Fig.1). This situation highlighted the diffusion of DM activities and responsibilities across Local Government in Queensland which may indicate a lack of consistency and different priorities in addressing DM policy matters.

A very strong level of interest and engagement with DM training was evident with 90% of respondents reporting that they had participated in DM workshops, conferences and professional development over many years, indicating a high degree of commitment to the professionalism of the field of DM.

The types of hazards that Councils were most concerned with were dependent on location, site and situation of individual Councils. Significant, however, was the very prominent concern for flood hazard, followed by bushfire (see Fig. 2).

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Study Aims:

- Councils' support for, and progress towards, a "prepared community model" for DM/community self-reliance;
- progress by Councils in assessing and facilitating public awareness of risks and DM; and
- levels of access to data/ information by Councils and the wider community.

Summary Themes

Forty-six (46) of the responding forty-eight (48) Councils, (96 per cent), either moderately, strongly or very strongly supported the proposal for members of the general public to take greater responsibility for managing their risks and building community resilience. Although many Councils reported actively providing hazard and risk information to the public via pamphlets/ booklets and other media, twenty-four (24) of the forty-three (43) responding Councils commented that they had no strategy for increasing community engagement as yet. There was a small number of Councils that were using more direct community engagement methods such as community meetings and developing community disaster response and/or reference groups. As with many other questions relating to support, Councils identified additional resources (funding and additional staff) to be the major priority in order to make improvements in public awareness and building community resilience capacity.

There appeared to be limited or partial development of the prepared community model. Almost half of responding Councils (44) said that they had not identified strategies to implement a prepared community model.

In a little less than half of responding Councils (21 of 48) there was evidence that knowledge or perceptions of the general public had been gathered, even if informally or unsystematically. Sixteen (16) of the forty-eight (48) Councils stated that they had not attempted to assess public awareness of hazards or risks or preparedness for disaster events.

Risk information at individual property level was said to be not available to eighteen (18) of the forty-two (42) responding Councils.

COUNCIL OPERATIONALISATION OF DM

Study Aims:

- status and review of protocols for DM planning/plan;
- the degree to which DM has been integrated across all Council functions and planning;
- issues in translating policies (State, Federal) and guidelines to local/regional application;
- public participation in DM planning;
- local policy, coordination, resourcing and community support for DM; and
- the integration of DM and land use planning, specifically.

Summary Themes

Twenty (20) out of the forty-eight (48) Councils responding indicated that they did not currently have a formal policy for disaster mitigation. A vast majority, however, reported that they did have and maintain a DM plan. This inconsistency may reflect issues with question semantics. Approximately one third of Councils (out of 33 responding), reported that their DM policy was effective, or supportive of local planning. Most Councils claimed to review their DM plan annually, most often using internal capacities.

The vast majority of Councils reported that DM requirements were either satisfactorily or very well incorporated into their corporate Council plan, Council operational plan or the annual budget process. However, a lower level of incorporation of DM was reported into land use planning processes, community or local plans, or master plans beyond the fundamental requirements of State planning and coastal policies. Nevertheless, in relation to State planning policy, a range of planning controls were reportedly used in effecting compliance with forty-one (41) of forty-four (44) Councils having land use zoning requirements sensitive to hazard risk. Very few Councils had an acquisition policy for high-risk properties.

A little over half of responding Councils had a business continuity plan either in place or under review or development to support their operations during a disaster. Only four Councils specifically stated that they were yet to address this.

As far as the context of the overall status of DM within Councils, overwhelmingly Councils stated that their circumstances had improved over the past three years. Councils most often stated that substantial improvement from this point on (and hence facilitation of State policy and guideline adoption) would require resources (funds, time, skilled personnel) and in particular access to external funding for DM activities.

A majority of Councils reported that the public supported them in undertaking DM activities, but did not participate in meetings, provide comment, or provide representation on committees or working parties in the DM planning process. Almost half of responding Councils cited perceived public apathy as a problem in achieving increased community engagement in DM planning.

Some Councils felt current State policies were placing increasing responsibilities onto them, but it was Local Government that was "picking up shortfalls" in effecting policy. More State support was commonly requested for staffing, and input/coordination of educational/awareness campaigns.

Most Councils reported little interaction with the Alliance document *Incorporating Disaster Management into Local Government Corporate Planning Practices, A practical Guide for Corporate Planners'* (LGAQ 30/1/08). This document was designed to help Councils integrate DM across their planning and operations.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND AMALGAMATIONS

Study Aims:

- barriers and/or current practices or initiatives in developing regional partnerships in DM;
- the nature of partnerships in terms of information exchange and other types of cooperation;
- the impacts of Queensland Council amalgamations on DM; and
- the effectiveness of the Alliance

Summary Themes

Results from this section strongly confirm regional alliances and networks both with the amalgamated and non-amalgamated Councils as the preferred form of DM partnership.

As far as specific impacts from amalgamation on DM functions in Councils (Q27), the weighting seems to have been more on the negative side than the positive with some notable exceptions. The disadvantages mentioned include changes in available resources to manage larger areas.

Across amalgamated Councils information and staff sharing has occurred but integration of mapping, modelling and land use planning were more problematical.

Many Councils, both amalgamated and non-amalgamated, reported that they had developed useful working partnerships with other Councils in their neighbouring regions. However, when asked to nominate specific activities under collaboration, (e.g. hazard mapping, modelling, joint funding submissions, DM planning), only a small minority reported that these activities were occurring.

In terms of support for encouraging further regional DM partnerships (Q41), strong views were expressed that EMQ/State needed to be more proactive in facilitating such partnerships – but not running the process – this was best done from the local level. Beyond this, more funding was again identified as being necessary to achieve anything further.

While open-ended responses indicated that respondents were generally supportive of the idea of having a LGAQ-EMQ Alliance, there seemed to be a significant level of confusion concerning its role, and disappointment with its effectiveness. More negative comments about the Alliance were received than positive.

FOCUS GROUPS

TRENDS AND THEMES FROM FOCUS GROUP DATA

The focus group meetings yielded rich, local data as well as wider perspectives from a select group of DM stakeholders at the Local Government level. Local context, covered specifically in the online survey, was not addressed separately in the focus groups. Issues relating to local context that emerged during discussions are incorporated into the three themes organized in accordance with the familiar study structure:

- Building community capacity.
- Council operationalisation of DM.
- Regional partnerships.

The researchers have summarized the focus group discussions by delineating emergent themes under these headings. These themes broadly relate to the originally-stated study aims, but noting that some aims were not directly addressed in discussions and some new themes were introduced.

Note: results are expressed in a manner to protect the identities of respondents in accordance with the ethical agreements required for the study.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Study Aims:

- to identify Councils' support for, and progress towards, a "prepared community model" for DM/community self-reliance;
- to understand progress by Councils in assessing and facilitating public awareness of risks and DM; and
- to examine levels of access to data/ information by Councils and the wider community

Emergent Themes

Public Self-sufficiency/Prepared Community

A general wish of Councils was to achieve public self-sufficiency of three to four (3-4) days. Ideally, this concept should be promoted, supported by policy and extended through community engagement. A number of factors were cited as reducing public self-sufficiency. These included: housing designs that encourage dependence on resources beyond the home (e.g. small/no kitchens); unrealistic expectations of the public concerning the speed of restoring services after an event; and the tendency for senior personnel from State-level agencies to promote their groups as a source of help during/after emergencies, thus propagating the perception that external agencies are responsible for DM and not the public itself in the first instance. One example raised by a Council in relation to the latter point revealed that individual residents who engage in looking after themselves in response/recovery (at effort and cost to themselves) can be

disadvantaged if government support is then later forthcoming to those who did not. Future "self-reliant action" by those disadvantaged citizens is then discouraged.

Managing public expectations in response and recovery was seen as an area that could be better addressed by public education in the preparation phase and reinforced by consistent policy. This included authorities more clearly specifying what help will be available, when and to whom. It was suggested that a role for public representation on the LDMG could assist in this regard.

Public Awareness Campaigns

All Councils consulted were active in addressing community awareness by various means including pamphlets, media, web-based resources and social networking sites. Overall, however, resourcing for such community engagement activities was seen as insufficient.

One Council commented that while much work in the public hazard education/awareness arena was being undertaken at national and State levels (and by some large commercial organizations), much of this did not actually reach the public and often Local Government had little input into its development and distribution. A preferred model was that DM information should be channelled through Councils to the community so that it could be synthesized appropriately, properly targeted, and contextualized for local circumstances. For the permanent resident population and for tourists, a staged strategy was proposed involving timely, targeted State-level programs backed by local campaigns that provided further specific detail. Engagement with accommodation providers, with the development of a specific program, pointing out their responsibilities in DM planning and duty of care, was recognized as essential.

Several Councils considered that EQ should be more involved in educating the public in DM. One proposal was that EMQ develop programs with EQ for consistent State-wide delivery (or even EMA for Australia-wide delivery). EMQ could provide regional resources to develop this at the regional and local levels adapted to the local context.

Risk Communication

One Council perceived a policy void in the area of communicating risk (i.e. risk probabilities) both to the general public and across organisations. In promoting hazard awareness and risk management to the public and across organizations, communication risk was seen a key problem, and one not addressed by any guidelines.

Community Data

Some Councils reported difficulty in collecting all of the community information they would like for DM e.g. data relating to demography, infrastructure, strategic facilities, lifelines. A protocol and resourcing was needed to collect and maintain key data and contacts in the case of an emergency - i.e. a comprehensive community database with risk profiles. State-level management to ensure some consistency was recommended.

COUNCIL OPERATIONALISATION OF DM

Study Aims:

- status and review of protocols for DM planning/plan;
- the degree to which DM has been integrated across all Council functions and planning;
- issues in translating policies (State, Federal) and guidelines to local/regional application;
- public participation in DM planning;
- local policy, coordination, resourcing and community support for DM; and
- the integration of DM and land use planning, specifically

Emergent Themes

Overall Emphasis of State Policy and EMQ

There was a perception, expressed by several of the Councils, that State DM policy and EMQ currently emphasise the *response* and *recovery* (reactive) elements of DM, reflecting an "operational bias" from State level. Councils' understanding of DM policy was that it should support the comprehensive approach and some considered that they were disadvantaged by not receiving as much support when wishing to engage in *prevention* and *preparedness* activities. Council DM, hence, also tended to reflect an operational bias.

It was suggested that prevention and preparedness (mitigation and adaptation elements) should be consistently and clearly included with response and recovery in DM exercises to help temper the "operational culture".

Roles of the State, EMQ, Local DM groups and Local Government

A variety of issues was raised in this regard. There was a general view that communication between EMQ and Local Government needed to be improved, and that there often was a disconnect between the State and Local Government on DM issues. A more cooperative relationship was desirable.

It was generally acknowledged by Councils that the DM Act and subsequent guidelines define specific entities and roles to create the Queensland DM system. In reality, however, perceived inconsistencies and uncertainties in the adoption and execution of roles and responsibilities, underpins many of the comments recorded in this study. Overall, it was commented that groups such as LDMGs /DDMGs needed to recognize, themselves, the roles which they play and better utilise the mechanisms associated with their structures to achieve better DM function. In terms of the DM system as a whole, several Councils expressed a perception that "top-down", operationally-biased processes and cultures prevailed in Queensland's DM and that this was unsatisfactory to Local Government.

"Short-circuiting" of processes/procedures was raised by some Councils. In particular, the State and EMQ were often seen to "arrive" in an emergency and "take over"- seemingly sidelining local groups and their knowledge. Councils often felt that they lost control of emergency situations, whereas Local Governments should ultimately remain responsible under the DM Act. One Council felt that their LDMG has been left "out of the loop" in emergencies. It was noted that on occasions in a post-disaster situation, materials and resources had arrived from the State-level that had not been requested by the local DM groups and were actually not needed. This created additional, unwarranted logistical burdens on local operations. Some believed that these examples reflected the State perception that politicians/EMQ needed to be seen by the public to be "doing something" in an emergency. There was also speculation that some State government departments/agencies which became involved in DM planning or emergency management under particular circumstances were unaware of the detail of DM policy and/or DM guidelines and hence did not follow accepted protocols. This may have been because the profile of DM across State government agencies was too low. In one example, SES facilities were located inappropriately, against advice from the local Council.

The above-described situation was also attributed by some Councils to the State/ EMQ not understanding or appreciating the DM capabilities of individual Councils. They acknowledged that for smaller, less well-resourced Councils, external intervention and direction was probably needed at an early stage. For those with more resources and advanced DM planning, however, the State/ EMQ should comply with the DM system and take advice/requests regarding interventions from the local DM group. This raises the issue of contrasting DM capabilities across the State and the State's perceptions of this.

The sense from several Councils was that the LDMG needs to be well-defined, appreciated and respected as a cornerstone of DM, more so than is currently apparent. A suggestion was made that a review of the role of the LDMG was needed. It was noted that this group had traditionally been seen as an agency for response, and in some instances its role was not clearly understood and/or blurred with that of Councils. Furthermore, the role and activities of the LDMG were perceived to depend on the chair and the membership. (Similar perceptions were held for the DDGs.). This prompted a view that greater effort was needed to ensure that the LDMG, and DM in general at Local Government level, was driven by systematic processes (rather than "people-driven"), which would ensure greater consistency with changes in personnel and the passage of time. Given its membership of stakeholders from (potentially) across a variety of Council functions, a view was advanced that greater promotion of the LDMG as a venue of exchange was needed to help embed DM Council-wide promoting and reinforcing prevention and preparedness.

Specificity of State Policy and Guidelines

Councils understood that State-level policy documents and guidelines provide general frameworks to be applied in the local context. This approach was seen as both advantageous and as disadvantageous. Although the general nature of the policies/guidelines allows flexibility to local conditions, its application requires expertise and resources at the Local Government level. There was clear recognition that DM is the legal responsibility of Local Government, but local Councils do not have enough funding to do what they are required to do under the DM Act. The comment was made that while larger Councils have adequate staff and resources, smaller Councils often lack the expertise to interpret general policy frameworks, then to develop the necessary local DM plans.

Integration of DM Planning Across Councils

In most of the Councils, some attempt had been made to integrate DM across Council operations, but the degree to which this has happened varied. Most commonly, DM had been introduced into Council corporate plans. A further discussion of integration into land use planning is forthcoming. Council prioritization of DM was at least partly reflected by the number of dedicated, full-time appointments specifically in the area. In turn, the degree of risk exposure, public support, and recency of incidents/disasters were factors in determining this.

The Number and Timing of Guidelines and Timelines for Adoption

The State DM Act introduced a range of responsibilities for Local Government and there is an obligation to adhere to these. Many guidelines were then produced over a short period of time, making it difficult for local Councils to address all of those guidelines quickly. Comment was made that many Councils would not have the capability to achieve compliance in the time required. The State has also required the development of sub-plans within very short timelines - for example, the tsunami sub-plan was specifically mentioned. Given current resourcing, Councils find it difficult to comply within the timeframes specified.

Leading on from this, it was generally noted that for Local Government, application of policy and integration across Council takes time. Local resourcing, prioritisation, politics, personalities and community factors may all play roles in the speed and comprehensiveness of policy/guideline adoption and integration. Comment was made that State policy makers needed to better appreciate that for most Councils, even larger ones, application and integration may take one-to-two years, or even as long as a decade to fully achieve!

Assistance (Including Technical Assistance/Resources) for Action

It was reported that the technical requirements associated with some guidelines is problematical given the lack of expertise within some Local Governments. A relatively

common solution was to engage consultants to advise on technical aspects of policy, and indeed wider DM issues and planning. Engaging consultants was viewed as advantageous in terms of getting the work done and in some cases, underpinning a sense that the work had been conducted independently of any particular group within Council (arguably facilitating wider cooperation, attention and adoption). The disadvantage was that outside consultants may not fully understand or appreciate local contextual factors. It was suggested that EMQ at the regional level could take on a specific role to provide or facilitate technical assistance.

Consultation of Local Government in the Development of Policy and Guidelines

There was recognition that from a strategic and overriding policy perspective, guidelines (and policies) were adequate and promoted DM uniformity across the State. A problem was identified, however, in translating guidelines and policy into local implementation, and then trying to educate the public accordingly.

An opinion was expressed that Local Government was not adequately consulted early or thoroughly enough in the preliminary stages of guideline development. This sometimes resulted in the release of guidelines that are not-fit-for-purpose in that their application to the local context is problematical and/or outcomes are difficult for the community to understand and use. It was even suggested that sometimes guidelines may not be needed in the form envisaged by the State or that some Councils may have already begun applying policy in their own ways – earlier consultation by the State with Local Government would identify these situations.

In this context, a "vicious circle" for Local Government was described: lack of early consultation on guideline development; guidelines released but not found to be fit-for-purpose; State then undertakes to review the guidelines; resulting in Local Government potentially having to re-visit their responses to adhere to new, adjusted State guidelines!

A specific example of such a not-fit-for-purpose guideline, raised by a number of Councils, concerned storm-tide mapping. The required cartographic representation of inundation zones and hence vulnerability was deemed by Councils to have made interpretation difficult, particularly for the general public. Some Councils have now adopted an alternative cartographic design which they consider to be more effective than that advocated by the State.

Consistency of DM

Consistency has already been mentioned in relation to other topics. There was generally strong support for greater State-wide consistency (particularly in relation to competency levels) in DM. This, it was argued, would allow the State and EMQ to approach local Councils, local DM groups and particular emergencies in a more systematic and appropriate way. This issue was viewed as being a "two-way street" - local Councils and groups needed to become aware of what was required for effective DM, while the State and EMQ should be offering better support to achieve this by meeting some staff/

resourcing costs or other mechanisms to assist Councils to achieve competency. Ensuring that each Council employed at least one dedicated DM staff/controller (not part-time with other responsibilities) was seen as a solution.

DD and Local Government Boundaries

DD and Local Government boundaries often do not coincide. It was commented that this should not be the case, particularly now that Council areas can be extensive. Problems were identified when Councils (Local Government areas) covered more than one DD. It was noted that in such cases, there was potential for DDs to have different approaches to DM, with Councils having to deal with this. Councils perceived that State DM policy/DM Act allowed for such individual decision-making at District level and did not offer the level of State-wide coordination needed to overcome problems of resulting inconsistency.

Public Role in DM

All Councils consulted supported the proposal that the public should take a greater role in managing their own risk – within the framework of Councils meeting their duty of care responsibilities. This was consistent with currently developing national and State policies concerning building community resilience. A degree of lowered resilience and/or apathy of the public was perceived as a problem by several Councils, although they observed that this was dependent on experiences with recent events and could be related to variability of population cohort, population "turnover"/time of residency and whether they were rural or urban dwellers. Comments were made highlighting the view that in time of disasters, while urban communities tended to wait for help from government agencies, rural communities were more prepared to deal with situations in a proactive manner through their own actions and mutual help. Councils were aware of their need to monitor changes in population geography, migration, tourist activities, work patterns, differences between urban and rural communities within their jurisdiction and to consider DM planning in this light.

DM and Land Use Planning

There were varying degrees of integration between DM and land use planning in Councils. All consulted were attempting to address the risk mitigation requirements of State planning policy (e.g. SPP1/03; coastal management policies) in their urban and regional planning. Nevertheless, in most cases, land use planning and DM operations of Councils were clearly differentiated and often did not seem to collaborate on a systematic, routine basis. The interaction that did occur was commonly facilitated by risk studies/projects through which planning scheme risk standards were recommended.

The use of planning schemes under the Integrated Planning Act, 1997 and the new Sustainable Planning Act, 2009 as a tool for DM – for example the introduction of new standards to respond to risks – was deemed problematical by some Councils. One issue was the perceived liability of Councils and potential compensation issues to landholders

if landholder rights were changed (for example by changing risk standards applied to land use planning). Councils were therefore wary of being proactive in introducing amended standards, and preferred to wait for someone else to "take the first step". Furthermore, risk modelling at local scales was either not available or rudimentary across many areas, making it difficult to develop robust standards for planning. Land use maps and other relevant risk information (e.g. contour and hydrology maps) were not up-to-date for DM planning in many Councils. Some Councils were reluctant, at least partly due to this, to release information to the public so that they can assess their own risk exposure and manage it accordingly.

Where risk standards are reviewed and changed, differential standards (old and new) can be apparent in the built environment – for example varying floor heights that are visible in local areas. One Council alluded to the need to consider applying standards in conjunction with desired urban design outcomes e.g. street-level car parking may be an appropriate ground-level land use in higher flood-risk areas, but this may be an undesirable use from the perspective of an urban design imperative to develop an active and attractive street culture.

It was noted that State planning policy allowed for a variety of solutions that again, could lead to inconsistencies in risk treatment. One Council pointed out that such inconsistencies can not only apply between localities/developments, but also occurred through time. It was suggested that under current State policy, once any necessary hazard management plans were accepted under development application requirements, there is no auditing to make sure that these plans are passed on to subsequent property owners.

An issue was also raised concerning cooperation between the State and Local Governments in relation to siting State-controlled infrastructure and facilities. At worst, it was suggested that facilities key to disaster response were placed at vulnerable locations by State authorities, against the advice of locals.

One Council proposed a simple criterion to assist the integration of DM and land use planning – that new developments should not place any extra burden on DM. In this regard among the concerns was the need to ensure that access during emergencies was not problematical.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Study Aims:

- barriers and/or current practices or initiatives in developing regional partnerships in DM;
- the nature of partnerships in terms of information exchange and other types of cooperation;
- the impacts of Queensland Council amalgamations on DM; and
- the effectiveness of the Alliance

Emergent Themes

Regional Partnerships between Councils

Regional partnerships between Councils are being achieved through relatively informal arrangements, opportunism and organic growth, rather than under any formal arrangements via the State. Partnerships are prompted by common needs for experience, information, expertise and training in order to further local and regional DM. Larger Councils with developed DM are observed to mentor smaller local Councils and/or those with less developed DM – and in some cases even provide feedback to the State-level. MOUs have been established to underpin some regional arrangements. Efficiencies at Council level, avoiding State-level management, "make it work" – experiences and training can be shared, regional projects developed based on regional needs, and resources controlled by Councils organized and deployed by working within the Council system. Personal contact to effect and maintain the relationships was greatly valued. Councils expressed a desire for greater opportunities to initiate and develop relationships with other local-level DM operatives. This was not in the sense of formal, State-level frameworks, but rather supporting networking occasions – i.e. through the State helping to organize meetings, forums and the like. This will be discussed further below.

Impacts of Council Amalgamations

Recently amalgamated Councils reflected on the relative size and capabilities of the entities amalgamated, and the implications of this to DM. They observed that amalgamating Councils can have contrasting resourcing and prioritization, with one of the Councils (usually the largest) having to take the lead. This Council then must "take on" a more extensive and possibly diverse area at risk, and must negotiate and consolidate DM arrangements and resources. In this regard, there may be fewer issues when a dominant Council has amalgamated with smaller Councils – "good" DM practices can be translated to the wider area without having to negotiate a consolidation of well-established and comprehensive local DM approaches that may differ. Nevertheless, this is likely to constitute a resource drain on the lead Council. Furthermore, residual resentment over amalgamation was viewed as a problem by one Council. There have been issues for some in establishing equal representation when re-constituting LDMGs following amalgamation.

Some DM resources have been lost following amalgamations. Personnel from some amalgamating Councils moved on or were re-assigned duties, leading to a loss of expertise of DM and hence a loss of continuity. Amalgamations, leading to an increase in area of responsibility for LDMGs and Council DM operatives have resulted in some practical problems. For example, attendance at DM group meetings was reported to be problematical for some participants having to travel from the periphery. Additionally, emergencies can now occur at greater distances from DM operations or coordination centres. One Council has developed a capability of moving their coordination centre to other locations better positioned for "outlying" emergencies.

Role of Regional EMQ Officers

Councils commonly reported good relations with regional EMQ officers, but did not always understand or agree with their roles. Regional EMQ officers were generally recognised as potentially providing a conduit to deal with problems and provide support, but some commented that this did not always happen. They would like to see a greater involvement by regional EMQ in facilitating connections from Local Government to the State rather than just being another link in a chain of "top down" communication. As mentioned above, some Councils would like to a see a greater role for regional EMQ in providing technical assistance in order to meet the technical requirements of some State guidelines.

Regional EMQ, the SES and Local Government

Strong comment was received from a number of Councils concerning the efficacy of existing arrangements between the State, EMQ, the SES and Local Government. One Council described a "web of reporting" between these stakeholders which, in the worst cases, resulted in resentment between groups. Confusion and overlap of roles and responsibilities and the way in which the relationships were structured and coordinated is believed to have resulted in problems in "getting on with applying the DM Act". Although Local Government finances most of the SES and its resources (according to Councils), several felt that they did not gain adequate recognition for this. It was pointed out that the SES is a _State_ emergency service, not a _Local Government_ emergency service. Nevertheless, in terms of funding, SES requests for resources (it was claimed) go to EMQ, but on approval by EMQ, Local Government provided the resources. If filling the request was problematical, Councils felt that they were then blamed by EMQ and the SES for not addressing the needs. Furthermore, during emergencies, locally funded SES resources could be called away to other areas by the State. It was strongly suggested that the State take over the SES in order to address these problems.

The LGAQ-DM Alliance

The role of the Alliance was unclear to several Councils, and there was a general feeling that Local Government so far had not benefited greatly from the Alliance. In some cases, the Alliance role was perceived as similar to that of the regional EMQ officers. One Council felt that the Alliance was a strategic-level entity and not really designed to facilitate collaboration at a planning or operational level.

Most Councils expressed a wish for the Alliance to have a greater local presence and to be more visible – more visits; be "_on the ground_" to a greater degree and even attend actual emergencies to gain a better appreciation of the different ways that DM operates across the State, and to gain understanding of the relative preparedness of localities across Queensland.

There were several suggestions of roles that the Alliance could develop/promote. These included: a clearer and stronger role as an advocate for local Councils in taking issues

forward to EMQ generally; facilitating more regular regional meetings to effect the above; facilitating consultation at the time of State guideline development; providing guidance on the development of MOUs; establishing and maintaining a database of DM contacts and basic information from across the State to assist Councils who are seeking collaboration and information exchange from other Councils/agencies.

Other Issues/Themes

Tropical Cyclone Shelters

Tropical Queensland coastal Councils raised issues associated with cyclone shelters and the standards required for certification. It was claimed several times that only one shelter in the State presently (at the time of the study) complies! More shelters were needed, but this was difficult with the rigorous standards in place and an inability to retrofit existing structures. It was suggested that the policy be re-considered. Councils were frustrated that Federal stimulus money could not be directed to upgrading school buildings to cyclone shelter standard – it was seen as an "opportunity lost".

A New Community DM Layer Developing?

It was reported that community "watch" groups or other community-level groups addressing DM were being encouraged by some Councils. Community response, however, was said to be variable. One Council commented that while members of the public acknowledged the benefit of such initiatives, they were less willing to take ownership of organizing and running groups, or saw it to be too much like "big brother" overseeing the community.

Individual development projects (e.g. private residential community development) were also identified as developing their own DM plans for their own communities. For the Council involved, the concern was ensuring that local community plans articulated with those of the established DM system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations is a synthesis of commonly and/or strongly emphasised points made by participants in both the online survey and focus groups. Incorporated in these are the Council-nominated requests, raised at focus group meetings, in response to the final question: "*What is your vision for improvement (in DM) and strategies to achieve it in the future*?"

The recommendations are organised under the three major headings of the study.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

1. In general, the State and national DM bodies should investigate ways to provide further assistance, incentives and coordination to local Councils to develop systematic strategies to promote a "prepared community model".

2. Intra-regional contrasts in public vulnerability and resilience should be recognized, particularly contrasts between urban and rural contexts.

Modifying Public Expectations

3. Greater promotion to the public of the concept of an imperative to sustain three to four (3-4) day self sufficiency within the community.

4. Clearer specification to the public of what emergency relief and help is likely to be available, when and to whom, in a response and recovery situation (i.e. to assist the public to understand its responsibilities, and decrease the chances of inequitable treatment). This information should be reinforced by consistently applied policy.

Improving Educational Systems

5. Improved State-wide coordination and consistency of awareness/education campaigns in a structure that involves Local Government in advisory, editorial and dissemination roles. Hazard/risk awareness and educational information from the State or EMA should be channelled through Councils to the community so that it can be synthesized appropriately, properly targeted, and contextualized for local circumstances. Public awareness should be systematically assessed as part of this system as a guide to program development and strategies.

6. Consideration be given to a greater role in DM education for EQ to deliver consistent but locally-contextualised DM curricula.

Increasing Direct Public Engagement

7. Where there are communities at high risk, the State should consider providing further support to Councils to facilitate targeted community meetings.

8. Opportunities for public involvement in the DM planning process be further investigated.

Risk Communication Guidelines

9. A specific guideline be developed in the area of risk communication both in regard to the public communications and across State and Local Government organisations.

OPERATISIONALISATION OF DM

Support for Consistency and Competency in DM

10. Better support to Local Government to achieve State-wide consistency in DM competencies through meeting some staffing & resourcing costs.

11. Employ at least one dedicated full-time DM controller in each Local Government Council.

Reinforcing the DM System and the Comprehensive Approach

12. In general, the State needs to review its current effectiveness in coordinating DM, and the degree to which its activities are consistent with a comprehensive, all-hazards approach to DM.

13. In regard to the above, a program approach (a structured, objective approach) should be emphasized through the DM system State-wide. For example, greater effort should be made to ensure that groups such as the LDMG and DDG are driven by systematic processes rather than being "personality-driven".

14. Groups such as the LDMG and DDG need to recognize the roles they play and utilise the mechanisms associated with their structures to achieve better DM function. In terms of the DM system as a whole, a Local Government perception of a prevailing "top-down" culture in Queensland should be addressed.

15. Prevention and preparedness (mitigation and adaptation elements) should be consistently and clearly included with response and recovery in DM exercises, policy-and-operational priorities, and funding. This is needed to help temper the current perception of Local Government as an "operational emphasis" at State level.

16. In support, greater State resourcing of prevention and preparedness at the local level should be considered to back LDMGs and Councils pursuing comprehensive, all hazards approaches.

17. Notably in a "response" situation, greater understanding at State level of the available capacities of individual local Councils is desired, with State intervention adjusted accordingly.

Facilitating Local Actioning of Policy/Guidelines

18. The precise role of regional EMQ officers needs to be clarified and evaluated from the viewpoint of their interactions with Local Government, the LDMG and the District-level stakeholders

19. Earlier and more comprehensive consultation is required between the State and Local Government in assessing: the real need for new policy and guidelines; and in the subsequent development of these.

20. Greater recognition is needed from the State that Councils often lack the resources and expertise to interpret general DM frameworks, then to research and develop local DM plans and comply with State requirements.

21. In specifying lead times for policy/guideline action, the State needs to better appreciate that for most Councils, even larger ones, application and integration may take one-to-two years, or even as long as a decade to fully achieve.

22. Similarly, the State should be more sensitive to Council budget cycles when designing funding/grant schemes and subsequent compliance requirements.

23. EMQ at the regional level could take on a specific role to provide technical assistance, in particular, to Councils implementing guidelines and policy.

24. Alternatively, a professional emergency services group (in addition to regional EMQ) could be established to manage and advise on DM activities- specifically advising on policy guidelines and providing technical support.

Clarifying Protocols and Boundaries Regarding the SES

25. Effect improved relationships between Local Government, EMQ and SES. There is some reported disharmony over the relative roles, responsibilities, reporting protocols and resourcing of these Groups, resulting in problematical relationship-dynamics in some areas. The State could consider taking over the SES to overcome such problems.

Data Building

26. Establishment of a State-wide database of local resources and expertise. This could be a project coordinated by the Alliance and facilitated by regional EMQ.

27. Development of a protocol and resourcing to collect and maintain key community data (e.g. demographic, vulnerability, facilities, infrastructure), contacts and risk profiles, managed at the State level to ensure consistency and currency.

28. Councils to be assisted by the State and other relevant authorities to capture, maintain and share spatially-referenced, high-resolution risk data (e.g. at property level).

Improving the Response to Transboundary Issues

29. The State needs to acknowledge that DM does not stop at borders. Local Governments require support for taking cross-border perspectives of DM, particularly in relation to State borders.

30. Also mechanisms need to be established to ensure consistency of DM policy and operations across DDs, particularly when there is more than one DD within a Local Government boundary.

Integrating DM and Land Use Planning/Building Codes

31. With regard to land use planning and DM, consideration should be given to an overall policy stating that any new developments should not place any extra burden on DM.

32. Clarification and action (if required) is needed regarding the liability of local Councils if they make changes to development controls/codes in order to manage risk. Mechanisms to protect Councils in such circumstances should be investigated.

33. Policy concerning cyclone shelters could be re-visited to reconsider the rigorous standards currently in place and the consequent inability to retrofit existing structures.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Facilitating Information Exchange and Partnership Development

34. The role of regional EMQ officers be clarified in terms of technical assistance (as mentioned previously), and an expansion of responsibilities be considered to
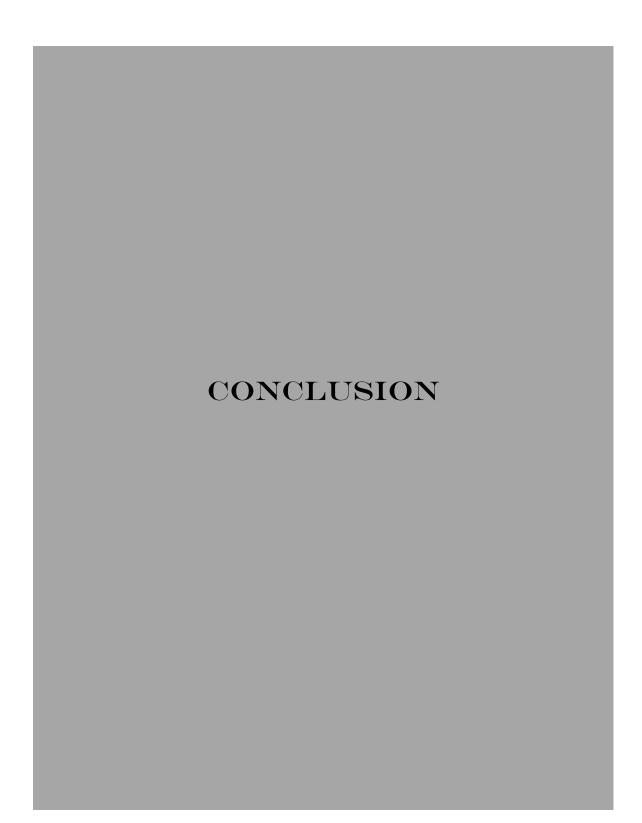
include greater facilitation of "bottom-up" communications from Local Government to the State and of regional Council partnerships.

35. Support (e.g. data sharing and networking opportunities) be given to Councils to continue furthering existing arrangements with neighbouring Councils and to develop new regional partnerships. Local Governments prefers to negotiate and implement such partnerships from their level rather than through formal State frameworks.

36. To facilitate information-sharing across the State, establish one central website, (possibly in EMQ), which contains the DM plans of all Councils in Queensland as well as brief descriptions of relevant legislation relating to DM.

37. Further to the above, the database could contain DM contacts at Local Government & regional level - again to facilitate interactions between Councils, at the local/regional level.

Responses to the Alliance

38. The Alliance needs to have a greater local presence and be more visible on the ground.

39. Possible roles for the Alliance might include: a clearer and stronger advocate for local Councils in taking issues forward to EMQ generally; facilitating more regular regional meetings to effect the above; facilitating consultation at the time of State guideline development; providing guidance on the development of MOUs; establishing and maintaining a database of DM contacts and basic information from across the State to assist Councils who are seeking collaboration, information exchange etc. from other Councils/agencies.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The present research has investigated how Local Governments in Queensland are progressing with the adoption of DM policies and supporting guidelines via survey and consultation with Local Government representatives. The results reported above reflect Local Government views on the issues of whether adoption is occurring, to what degree and whether policies and guidelines are being effectively implemented to create safer, more resilient communities – along the path to developing prepared communities. Barriers to achieving this aim have been examined, and recommendations have been suggested from the local Councils for overcoming these barriers. Much has been learned that, in the presentation and publication of this report, will hopefully benefit Local Governments by raising awareness of their perception of critical issues in DM at the "coalface" of Local Government in Queensland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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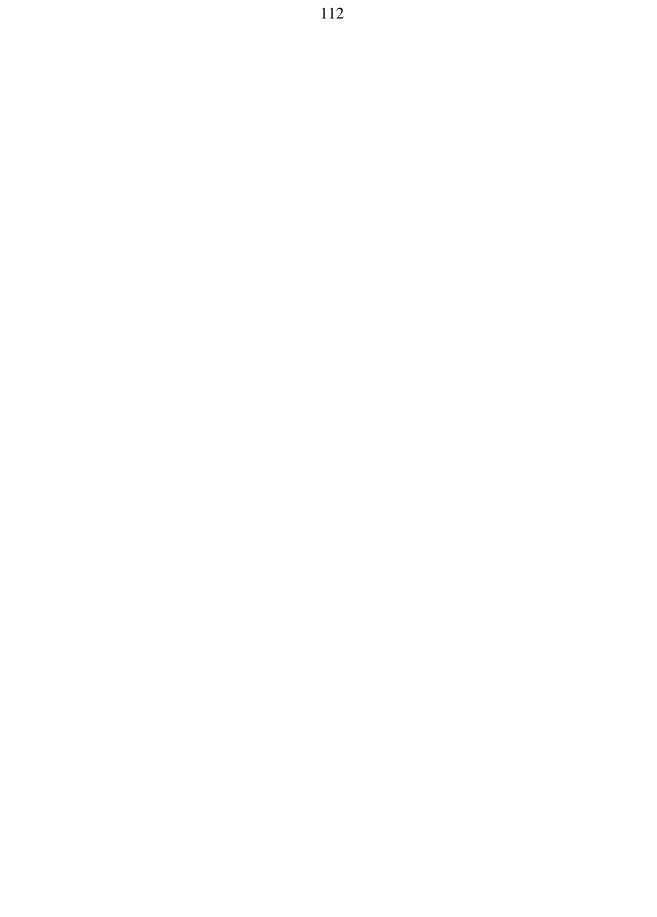
APPENDIX 1

Local Governments Responding to the Online Questionnaire (multiple responses shown in brackets).

1. Banana (2)
2. Barcoo
3. Blackall-Tambo
4. Boulia
5. Brisbane City (3)
6. Bundaberg
7. Cairns
8. Carpentaria
9. Cassowary Coast (2)
10. Central Highlands
11. Cloncurry
12. Cook
13. Diamantina
14. Flinders
15. Fraser Coast (3)
16. Gladstone
17. Gold Coast City
18. Goondiwindi
19. Gympie (3)
20. Hinchinbrook (2)
21. Ipswich
22. Isaac (3)
23. Kowanyama Aboriginal
24. Lockyer Valley
25. Logan City
26. Longreach
27. Mackay (2)
28. Mapoon Aboriginal
29. McKinlay
30. Moreton Bay
31. Mornington
32. Murweh
33. North Burnett
34. Quilpie (2)
35. Redland City
36. Richmond
37. Rockhampton
38. Scenic Rim
39. Somerset
40. South Burnett
41. Southern Downs
42. Sunshine Coast
43. Tablelands
44. Toowoomba
45. Townsville (2)
46. Western Downs (2)
47. Whitsunday
48. Winton (2)

APPENDIX 2 - Map

APPENDIX 3

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

(to be attached)

APPENDIX 4

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

POLICY ADOPTION / GUIDELINE DOCUMENTS.

What are the issues of translating policies & guidelines (national, State, LGAQ) to local/regional application? Solutions?

 [notably policy/guidelines that specifically define a role for Local Government]
[e.g. SPP1/03; DM Act; LGAQ DM Guidelines, others?]

AMALGAMATION / REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

What problems or advantages has 'amalgamation' brought to DM? (*if applicable*).   Is a greater emphasis on regional DM partnerships desirable and possible?   If so, what is needed to support this?

PUBLIC ROLE IN DM

What responsibility should the public be accepting for reducing risk?   What should their role be in DM planning & PPRR?

CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES and DM (not reported in this study)

Has your Council attempted to integrate potential impacts of climate change into DM policy? Any plans to do so?

VISION for improvement and strategies to achieve it in future.