

File No: SF6488
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17 November 2016

Mr Mike Blake
Review Investigator
Government Flood Review Team
Brian.edmonds@ses.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Blake

Submission to Flood Review

Following your letter of request for submissions, I wish to provide the following comments. Please note the comments below represent officers' views only. Due to the time frame for responses there has not been an opportunity to obtain Council endorsement of this submission.

In line with the purpose of the review as outlined in your correspondence, the items listed are seen as high level strategic issues that, when addressed, will assist responding agencies should another flood event occur in the Launceston region of the magnitude experienced in June. Council staff are working on a number of local issues associated with mitigation, response and recovery identified as areas for improvement following the flood.

Updating Relevant Acts

There is a need to pursue a review of the *Emergency Management Act 2006* and *Tasmania Fire Service Act 1979* to reflect the current arrangements put in place by the Tasmanian Government.

With the move of the State Emergency Service (SES) reporting to the Chief Officer Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS), the current Acts are not reflective of this arrangement at an administrative or operational level. Both Acts need updating to recognise current operational arrangements and contemporary emergency management requirements for managing major incidents.

The result should improve emergency response operationally, particularly for non-fire events where the roles and responsibilities of SES and TFS Senior Officers are currently not well defined.

Weather and Flood Data

Weather Radar

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has a radar located at Loones Hill, West Takona, 35km west-south-west of Burnie. It is our understanding coverage of the greater Launceston area is at the outer edge of this facility's capacity and hence marginal in relation to provision of accurate data.

It would be expected the Mt Koonya radar, 50km east-south-east of Hobart would similarly provide marginal data regarding its coverage of the Launceston area.

We understand coverage of the North East and North East Coastal areas are even more marginal.

As the Launceston region has the population of greatest concentration in the north of the State, this lack of coverage needs to be addressed. This issue is further compounded in that generally weather patterns producing significant rain events putting Launceston and communities in the South Esk River catchment at risk of flooding, are deep low pressure systems that move onto the east coast and over the river catchment from an easterly direction.

The area of least coverage by the existing radar network is the area with greatest potential to be the source of a flood event in Launceston.

The installation of a radar in the North East would enable more accurate forecasting by the BOM in to the Launceston region. The order of cost for such a facility is believed to be in the \$10-\$15 millions.

Flood Data

During the floods, river height measuring stations on a number of rivers in the region were reported as being 'off the scale' or not operating, presumably due to the flood water inundation. The location and capacity of river level monitoring equipment requires review. Accurate and timely data on river height is critical to emergency managers, who have responsibility for community safety and care when dealing with a flood event.

A review of the type and capacity of river monitoring equipment needs to occur to ensure capability and fit for purpose.

Regional Versus Local Planning

Currently, municipalities in the Tamar region develop their emergency response and recovery plans in relative isolation. The risk with this process is an over optimistic evaluation of support resources available from State Agencies, SES, Police, TFS and Tas Ambulance to assist within the municipality.

This was evident during the June 2016 flood event where, due to the duration and size of the incident, resources and capability were substantially stretched.

Provision exists in the *Emergency Management Act 2006* for planning at a regional level and/or on a combined municipal basis. It has been primarily a lack of resource (a coordinator) to enable this level of planning to occur.

As a consequence of the Justice Department Review into Emergency Management arrangements in Tasmania and the recommendations coming from that review, there is work being undertaken to identify the cost of providing resources to enable regional planning. This has now been proposed to be in the form of additional staff for each of the regional SES areas.

Should this much needed initiative be funded, the SES Regional Managers would appear best placed to lead regional emergency planning and management of any outcomes. Launceston is supportive of this proposal and would encourage its implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your review of the devastating June flood event. We look forward to the findings of your review.

If you require any further information or clarification, please contact Mr Rod Sweetnam (Director Facilities Management) - 6323 3505.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Dobrzynski', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Dobrzynski
General Manager