

PLEASE QUOTE

Your Ref.

Our Ref. 12/15/4 & 836164

Enquiries Mr Gary Neil (GN:MR)

80 Wilson Street, Burnie Tasmania

P.O. Box 973, Burnie TAS 7320

Telephone: (03) 6430 5700

Facsimile: (03) 6431 3896

E-mail: burnie@burnie.net



10 November 2016

Mr Mike Blake
Review Inspector
Government Flood Review Team
GPO Box 308
HOBART TAS 7320

Dear Mr Blake

FLOOD REVIEW: JUNE 2016

I refer to your letter received by email on 17 October 2016 advising of the State Governments intention to review the June 2016 floods in Tasmania and seeking submissions on a number of strategic issues outlined in the terms of reference.

To provide some context around Council's submission, a short overview of the flood in the Burnie area and the impacts from our perspective is provided.

Over the weekend 4-5 June 2016 significant rainfall occurred in the hinterland across north-west Tasmania, with consequential localised and broader flooding occurring in the Burnie municipality. From a Council infrastructure perspective, there was damage to road and drainage infrastructure and facilities in river reserves, with consequential repair and clean up works required. To date the cost of the flooding directly to Council has been in the order of \$526,000. Council will make application under the Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements seeking reimbursement of costs in accordance with the guidelines.

The Council was fortunate, in comparison to many other North West and Northern Councils' in respect to the extent of damaged and Council was able to put measures in place to restore access to affected communities relatively quickly. However works continue on rectification of flood damage to restore infrastructure, facilities and reserves to the pre-flood condition. Private properties were not as fortunate with significant property and equipment damage in the River Road area with inundation of water from the Emu River.

It was pleasing to note that flood mitigation measures which Council had previously put in place, achieved their purpose. An example of this was a flood levee installed along the Cooee Creek, adjacent to Cambria Court in response to severe flooding in 2011. The levee prevented flooding from reoccurring in 2016.

As mentioned earlier from a community perspective, the more significant impact for Burnie was the flooding of the River Road industrial area and consequential damage to premises,

loss of stock, goods in transit and interruption to business activity and consequential restoration costs. Going forward this area would seem to Council to be a high priority location for further investigation to understand the hydraulics of the Emu River, potential for future flooding and opportunities to consider mitigation of flood impacts.

In reference to the strategic issues noted in the correspondence, Councils submission is as follows:

- **Local Mitigation Actions**

Council's previous work in undertaking modelling of the urban catchments (excluding river systems) provided a clear understanding of potential flood risk and confirmed the value of current and future flood mitigation investments by Council.

Ongoing support from Commonwealth and State Government agencies and access to grant programs is essential to assist Council in understanding local risk profiles and mitigating risks within the sphere of Council control.

- **Emu River Flooding**

The flooding of the River Road industrial area, due to inundation of the Emu River, was the first significant occurrence of flooding in recent memory. This flood has had a significant impact on the businesses affected and much debate has occurred as to the cause of the inundation.

There is a need for our community to better understand the cause of the flood and potential opportunities to mitigate future incidences of the June 2016 flooding. Anecdotally the log jam at the Emu River Rail Bridge is being attributed as playing a significant role in the flooding in this area. In the aftermath of the flooding, in our view, there was unnecessary debate as to which authority is responsible for debris removal against infrastructure. It is Council's view that the Crown is responsible for the river and therefore should be the lead in debris management, however the owner of any infrastructure within the river system has a role to manage any debris that poses a risk.

It is understood that a flood study had been previously undertaken by the State Government on the lower reaches of the Emu River, however to Council's knowledge this information had not been distributed to relevant stakeholders for information and consideration.

In Councils view a detailed analysis of the root causes of the Emu River flooding should be undertaken by the relevant State Government agencies and consider, among other matters, that following actions:

- Correlate the previous flood study with the actual extent of flooding that occurred;
- Understand and qualify the ARI of the flood event;

- Model the river hydraulics, with a focus on the effect/impact of a log jam on the Emu River rail bridge, to understand the implications of the flow restriction on the height and extent of the flood event;
- Assess the opportunities for and benefits of installing a gauging station on the Emu River as a means of providing early warning of future flood events;
- Identify potential mitigation strategies to minimise the risk of future flooding of the industrial area along River Road; and
- Communicate and consult with the community in the conduct of the study and on the findings of the study.

- **Communications**

From an operational perspective Council believes that there was good information flow between the various agencies tasked with EM roles during the flood event and there were appropriate mechanisms in place to share and receive necessary information.

In such situations there are challenges with incorrect information and advice being communicated via media outlets and via social media. An instance noted in Burnie's situation was the broadcasting of information about the imminent closure of the Bass Highway at Emu River Bridge on the Monday following the heavy rainfall. While there was no formal advice of any such proposal, the information conveyed created concern and confusion in the community.

Updating of road closure information on the Tasmania Police website did appear to have a time lag on occasions, however it is acknowledge that it is challenging to receive and convey information in a timely manner when focused on managing the incident at hand.

Post the incident, there was good and ongoing communication with the Regional Emergency Management Committee, with regular and targeted briefings occurring.

At a State level opportunities were made available to work directly with Heads of Agencies to quickly work through relevant matters in the aftermath of the flood. This was a worthwhile initiative and supported the speedy resolution of jurisdictional issues and consequential implementation of recovery actions.

- **Regional Flood Recovery Committee.**

The Regional Flood Recovery Committees were established promptly and were well led and coordinated by Peter Edwards. The Mayor was the Deputy Chair of the North West Committee and participated in the weekly meetings held to work through the local recovery response with key government agencies and Local Government. This

format worked very well, as did shared access to the Common Operating Platform (COP). It should be noted that this is an initiative which could be continued between DSG and Local Government enhancing communication between the two parties. The regional committees encouraged a focus for Government on local issues in the regions and were effective in providing support and information to affected communities. The final report from this Committee will outline and review the immediate response, intermediate response and of course key infrastructure renewal projects and future mitigation projects for the consideration of Government.

- **Debris Management**

A particular challenge arising from the June floods was the significant quantity of debris which was deposited on lands managed by Council, the Crown and private lands.

For this Council the main issue was timber debris that accumulated:

- on crown reservations where Council has a lease; and
- the South Burnie Beach.

While Council took the view that it needed to take the lead and remove the debris so as to restore access for the community, there were challenges in securing the necessary approvals to do so, from a time perspective and also from a process perspective.

Delays in securing the necessary approvals can result in negative community feedback and frustration.

It would be beneficial to have a protocol in place for the future management of flood debris to stream line any approvals process and to have clear lines of responsibility.

A broader approach to debris management is rivers should also be explored, partially from the perspective of addressing debris management at source, the removal of mobilised debris in the river systems (post flood) and establishing clear responsibility for said debris in river systems.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Wardlaw
GENERAL MANAGER