Flood Submission –

Rural Business Tasmania

**The effectiveness of the strategies, preparedness and plans related to managing flood risk in Tasmania that were in place prior to the June 2016 floods occurring: including existing and potential levee systems:**

The areas around Mersey Lea in particular encountered issues with train bridges and the designs were found to be lacking in such an impact. A significant number of bridges and similar structures that were access ways to properties caused significant issues.

**Community preparation, resilience and awareness, including awareness of insurance matters, relating to major flood events in Tasmania**

The speed at which the floods descended on some communities, particularly those in the north west, did not allow for them to prepare sufficiently. If they did they measured their preparedness against the last largest flood and were found wanting.

The Communities all banded together and showed their strengths – helping each other or those in need. Those less impacted came out in support of those who had been devastated by the flood. Even those that had been impacted significantly

Most in the agriculture industry impacted by the floods found it hard to deal with insurance companies particularly getting quick responses to enable them to replace/repair lost equipment. It would be fair to say that many did not fully understand the terms and conditions of their insurance policies and what were covered and what was not or had been specified. An example of this is a farmer who had flood cover however as he had not specifically itemized his irrigation pump that was lost, he was not covered.

**The causes of the floods which were active in Tasmania over the period 4-7 June 2016 including cloud-seeding, statewide water storage management and debris management**

Not qualified to comment on cloud seeding activities.

Debris management caused the most significant damage but it would seem to be very hard to predict and plan for the amount of debris that was evident after the fact. The removal of additional debris resulting from the floods have not been cleared at a pace that would provide confidence should another significant event occur that a similar result will be reached.

**The use and efficacy of forecasting, community alerts, warnings and public information by authorities in responding to flood events.**

The ABC radio did a great job in providing community updates, road and river warnings during the time of the flood event. Post flood there was a stream of information that was available from various media sources and platforms as well as different community engagements.

Continual and different types of messaging to the affected communities is important as each individual will interpret and take in messaging at different times depending on their mind space at the time.

**The effectiveness of transition from response to recovery in the week following the June floods; including capacity and priorities for infrastructure repair, and immediate assistance payments.**

The State Government rolled out flood recovery programs both individual and community based rapidly and would appear to have met community expectations.

The Flood Recovery Taskforce provided substantial amount of information and direction either directly or via service providers to the affected communities.

**Consideration of the detrimental environmental effects of the flooding upon the landscape, and what effective mitigation measures may be necessary to avoid similar events.**

Debris management on the affected properties/areas is critical as it caused the most impact and devastation. Rocks and log debris in paddocks have caused significant damage

Review of upper river forestry catchment areas may reveal that the lack of native vegetation and clearing of trees around river catchment areas may have led to the debris caused by the flood event being mitigated.

**Any other matters relevant to the terms of reference including matters relating to the floods in Huonville.**

We have nothing to add in relation to the Huonville floods, however we had a number of applications from those affected through the Rural Relief Fund as well as discussions with affected businesses in the Huonville town centre prior to the government funding being allocated. These conversations included putting them in touch with relevant parties including government representatives who could provide that advocacy for them and their situation at the time. There was confusion as to what government support the community could apply for.

**Other matters for consideration:-**

**Co-ordination:-**

The co-ordination of public support is vital in the early days of a crisis and this was not evident with many trying to/raising money but not knowing where they should send it. There was also a need to ensure that any offers of support came with the confidence that it was valid and true. We had people raising money via “go fund me”, local communities holding fund raisers, interstate offers of seed/silage which meant transparency was important as to where the money was being used. Clear avenues should be identified early in the crisis.

Using an already established process which had strong governance such as the Rural Relief Fund allowed the community to be assured that the money was being directed to those that needed it. Rural Business Tasmania also became a beacon particularly for those interstate wanting to help, send volunteers and/or donate silage and again its strong governance and presence meant it was a trusted avenue.

If a group had already been established that could come together within 24 hours of the crisis to determine action this would have assisted the community. Early linkages with organisations such as St Vincent de Paul’s/Red Cross/Mission Australia/Salvation Army who were working on their own during this crisis but were receiving public donations, would mean that clear messages can be provided to the community reducing confusion as to who is doing what at the start. We have now instigated in the north a group of said groups to look at future response actions.

We attempted to use the Volunteering Tasmania website to engage volunteers to assist us in managing the influx of work however it did not result in any response from the group so we had to engage the community ourselves to get help.



Elizabeth Skirving

Chief Executive Officer

Rural Business Tasmania

