

Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements Submission June 2014

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Resilience and recovery initiatives

1. <http://www.hms.uq.edu.au/news/hms-students-get-flood-affected-children-active-in-sport/>
In the immediate aftermath of the Brisbane 2011 floods I identified an area that not only needed attention but that also had the potential to benefit the broader community. Despite having connections at the School of Human Movement Studies, UQ, and being a parent at the school where the program was to be provided, I spent 6 months fighting to get support for the program. The red tape that various levels of government imposed on a simple program made it virtually impossible and highlights the failure of all levels of government to really understand the issues on the ground or the importance of listening to someone who was not only directly affected but also well qualified to provide advice.
2. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/122412333/Floodfish-Preparing-for-a-Natural-Disaster>
The document above was prepared by four people affected in various ways by the Brisbane 2011 floods. Despite numerous attempts to gain support from State and Commonwealth government agencies, none were prepared to accept this document and to make it publicly available. The authors did not ask for remuneration, they simply wanted to provide practical advice based on firsthand experience.
3. The examples above demonstrate that government agencies are often unwilling to listen to the broader community and to learn from important resilience and recovery initiatives.

Interaction between Commonwealth and State governments

1. Throughout the process, from the immediate aftermath of the flood when the people coordinating the recover refused to send assistance to our area, all the way through to finally getting certification for our new home, there has been excessive red tape and mismanagement at all levels.
2. Although many of these issues were between local and State governments rather than the Commonwealth and the State, they serve to demonstrate poor interaction between the levels of government.

Effective and sustainable balance: recovery and mitigation

1. Appropriate natural disaster mitigation, such as the Brisbane floods, can only be achieved if there is open and frank discussion about the risks and consequences.
2. Similarly, in order to have these discussions, politics must be removed from the debate. As a case in point, after the 1974 floods, plans were put in place to appropriately dam various rivers in South-East Queensland and thereby significantly reduce the risk of flooding. A change in government saw these plans scrapped in the interests of politics. The result is that Brisbane is not flood protected.

Medium and long term economic consequences

The medium and long term economic consequences are both direct and indirect. Furthermore, these costs are borne by all levels of government as well as individuals and businesses that are both directly and indirectly affected by the natural disaster. These include:

- (a) Increased demand for range of health and community services. For example, the stress of an event can lead to a cardiac event requiring extensive hospitalisation and intervention as well as long term rehabilitation and medication;
- (b) Changes in spending patterns by people directly affected by the disaster will flow on to local businesses. These, in turn, will change their spending patterns (both personal and business) as demand for their services decrease;
- (c) Further, the amount that these businesses then pay in local and state government charges and taxes is reduced;
- (d) Natural disasters can have a significant impact on children and their ability to learn. This, in turn, will have an impact on their ability to gain entry to courses and degrees and therefore place restrictions on their ability to earn an income later in life. Obviously this will have long term implications for all levels of government as these individuals need access to more support services and pay less taxes;
- (e) Households facing significant economic hardship may elect to defer or cancel activities designed to provide children with a rounded education. For example, participation in club sport may be withdrawn because households cannot afford the fees. This, in turn, will have implications for local sports and recreation clubs;
- (f) Household incomes are also directly affected by natural disasters, as a larger proportion of disposable income is allocated to paying for repairs. As a result, in homes where children are struggling with the effects of the disaster, it may be impossible for the household to cover the cost of support services for these children. This, in turn, may lead to a range of problems for the children;
- (g) Deterioration in economic well being can lead to substance and alcohol abuse. Not only does this have health implications (and the obvious associated economic costs) but it can also lead to increases in domestic violence, MVAs etc. All of which, have economic implications that should not be underestimated;

- (h) Community dysfunction increases leading to conflict both within the home and between homes. Such dysfunction can lead to an increase in demand for health services as well as placing an additional demand on law enforcement agencies;
- (i) Damage to infrastructure during a natural disaster has obvious economic consequences. Less obvious is the economic impact on communities as a result of delays in repair or replacement of such infrastructure. For example, delays in road repairs may eventually lead to changes in peoples usual travel patterns. This, in turn, may have an impact on local businesses.