

BRISBANE GETTING WISER

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Brisbane City Council has continued to implement the recommended actions for the Lord Mayor's Taskforce on Suburban Flooding and raising the profile of the impacts of flooding through its successful Be FloodWise Campaign (FM Dec 05 & Dec 06)

Like most major cities, Brisbane has evolved around its river and creeks. In 2005, the Lord Mayor's Taskforce on Suburban Flooding investigated ways to minimise the impacts of heavy rain on flood prone areas of the city.

The Taskforce produced a report that recommended 24 actions for implementation with ten of these being identified as key priority actions for Council to implement immediately. Over the last six to 12 months, Brisbane City Council has further progressed the key priority actions to address and mitigate the impacts of flooding across Brisbane. The following is a brief overview of the continued implementation of the priority tasks.

Flooded Road Signalling

Council has installed two sets of flashing light warning systems on low level roads at Rocklea and Boondall to warn motorists of the flooded road hazard and effectively closes the road. These flashing light warning systems are connected to telemetry stations that collect real time rainfall and creek height data. When the creek reaches a certain in stream height it triggers an emergency response that activates the flashing light system and closes the flooded road.

Council has also commenced engaging the local at-risk communities in these areas to look at how they can benefit from these flashing lights as early warning systems and to establish local flood ready plans.

Planning work has been undertaken to identify a number of low lying roads across the City where these flashing light warning systems can be installed in the future.

FloodWise Access Project

During late 2006, Brisbane City Council approached the 18 local councils that made up the South East Queensland region seeking endorsement and funding support for the roll out of a SEQ Region FloodWise Access Project.

This project is being primarily funded under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program (NDMP) with contributions from each of the councils participating. The project will see a standardised on line information system, FloodWise, which supplies councils with "real time" data about their water level recorders and rainfall gauges.

The system will provide users with information to allow them to take appropriate action to minimise or mitigate the damaging effects of:

- Riverine flooding;
- Creek flooding;

- Local overland flooding caused by overloaded stormwater systems;
- Flash flooding caused by severe weather events; and
- Tidal inundation.

They will have the capability of viewing their own telemetry hydrometric network for river and creek water levels through a password-protected, dedicated web page.

It is anticipated that FloodWise will also assist the region with community flood response and improved flash flood forecasting through SMS messages and e-mails to a variety of pre-defined triggers alerting emergency managers and the community to impending floods.

BOM Agreement

In early March 2008, Brisbane City Council and BOM signed an agreement to participate in a partnership for severe weather and flood warning and emergency management for Brisbane city.

This agreement covers the roles of the two agencies in the operation of severe weather and flood warning and emergency management systems.

Both parties are working together to provide community awareness and safety and it is anticipated that the following will be achieved through working collaboratively:

- develop and adopt communication strategies for transmitting local severe weather and flood advice, forecasting and warning information;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of BOM and Council in the management and operation of flood information systems; and
- adopt best practice severe weather and flood emergency management guidelines.

City Plan Flood Code

A draft Flood Code for City Plan is being developed by Council that will restrict development and filling within the 100 year ARI by ensuring all types of developments take into account their cumulative impact, that there are no adverse impacts on neighbouring properties near the development and that the hazard risk is identified and addressed as part of the development.

Council is also developing some additional planning scheme policies to support the new draft code and investigating a staged introduction where existing codes are updated and enhanced inline with the intent of the draft flood code.

Community Awareness

In September 2006, Council launched its Be FloodWise education campaign with the aim of increasing awareness among Brisbane residents of the importance of being prepared for floods.

A community survey was conducted to establish a benchmark of the attitudes and behaviours of Brisbane residents towards issues relating to flooding which formed the basis of the Be FloodWise campaign.

The launch was followed up with a multi-media campaign from December 2006 to March 2007 to create heightened awareness among the Brisbane general public of the need to Be FloodWise during the summer storm season.

The campaign focused on four key messages:

- Don't risk it. Turn around.
- Listen out for flood forecasts and be prepared.
- Planning to build or renovate? Get a free FloodWise Property Report.
- Prepare your home and yard for summer storms.

The call to action in all media was, "even in a drought, flash flooding can occur so now is the time to Be FloodWise."

Council is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Be FloodWise campaign that will:

- assess impact on flood awareness and preparedness of the multi-media campaign that ran from December 2006 to March 2007 and again from October 2007 to March 2008;
- identify implications arising from audience and message evaluations for future campaign development, and
- establish a framework for future campaign evaluations.

This evaluation will assist in guiding future direction for Council's Be FloodWise campaign.

Property Reports

From June 2008 Brisbane residents will be able to obtain a free FloodWise Property Report on line from Council's website. Residents will be able to download specific flood information for their property including flood levels, ground levels, habitable floor levels for building or renovating purposes and other useful information in determining flood risks associated with a specific property.