

City of Ipswich

Local Disaster Management Sub Plan

Public Information and Warnings

A3980098: August 2021



Approval and Endorsement

Approved by Ipswich City Council by resolution at the Environment and Sustainability Committee 7 October 2021 and Council Ordinary Meeting of 21 October 2021.

Endorsed by the City of Ipswich Local Disaster Management Group on the 6 November 2021.

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PART 1: ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

1.1 Authorising environment

This plan is prepared by Ipswich City Council under the auspices of the Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP) for the City of Ipswich and pursuant to the provisions of Section 57(1) of the Disaster Management Act 2003.

The plan aligns to Council's [Disaster Management Policy](#)¹ which outlines a commitment *to promote a resilient community that can prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of disaster which includes a focus on the needs of the community's most vulnerable persons.*"

1.2 Amendment register

A history of reviews and amendments is outlined in Table 1.

Vers	Date	Comment
2.00	April 2018	Approved and endorsed version
2.01	Feb 2019	Annual review – minor and inconsequential amendments – update to template
2.02	21 May 2019	Minor and inconsequential amendments including amendments to reflect consolidated warnings principles released by Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience.
3.00	26 July 2021	Plan review and update to align with the Australian Warning System which was updated following the Royal Commission into the National Disaster Management Arrangements.

Table 1 - Amendment register

1.3 Principles

This sub plan has been prepared as supporting document to the LDMP. Accordingly, it must be read in conjunction with the LDMP itself. With the exception of pertinent information, reference to existing statements, definitions and acronyms will be excluded from the sub plan.

Disaster operations occur in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environments (VUCA). Policy, procedures and doctrine provides guidance to achieve community safety outcomes. Overly prescriptive doctrine that focuses on process compliance at the expense situational awareness; context and outcome based decision making is likely to achieve adverse outcomes.

Justifiable deviations and adaptations to disaster doctrine are permissible and should be assessed on a case by case basis.

¹ Ipswich City Council (2020), Disaster Management Policy [online] Available at: https://www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/131740/Disaster-Management-Policy.pdf

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this sub plan is to provide a framework in the provision of information and warnings to affected members of the public during a disaster situation.

It may be utilised by all members, deputies, and advisors of the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and the organisations that they represent and / or any partnering organisations involved to assist in the preparation and dissemination of information and warnings.

This sub plan is not intended to replace or replicate the public information and warnings procedures of individual organisations. It instead strives towards a consistent approach to have an informed and aware community.

1.5 Key objectives

The key objectives of this sub plan are to outline the:

- arrangements related to public information
- arrangements related to the issue of warnings related to the Australian Warning System

1.6 Planning assumptions

In the preparation of this document, the following assumptions were made.

- Individual agencies, including primary agencies have governance arrangements for warnings and public information.
- That the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements are locally led, which is contrasted with the top-down approach required in some circumstances such as pandemic.

1.7 Continuous improvement

This document will be reviewed at least annually² with relevant amendments made and distributed as needed. The review process will be in accordance with the State guidelines.

Minor amendments that do not materially affect the plan are able to be authorised by the Emergency Management and Sustainability Manager.

It is acknowledged that feedback from stakeholders is essential. Proposals for amendments or inclusions can be sent to emergency@ipswich.qld.gov.au.

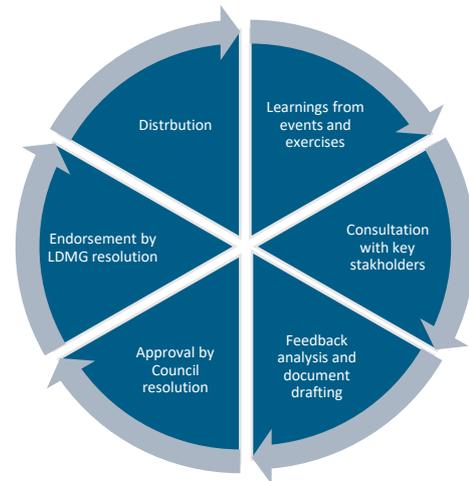


Figure 1 - Continuous improvement cycle

² Section 59, Disaster Management Act 2003, Reviewing and Renewing (the) Plan

PART 2: NATIONALLY CONSISTENT

The Australian Government, through the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience has developed common features to guide best practice in warnings and public information. These are adopted by each State, including Queensland.

2.1 Australia's warning principles³

The 10 principles guide the development and use of warnings in Australia. They outline why warnings are important and how warnings are provided most effectively. The design and use of warnings should be guided by a total warning system, underpinned by clear governance arrangements, operate within an integrated incident management system, and be supported by delivery systems.

Australia's warning principles	
1.	Lifesaving: Warnings can save lives and protect people from harm. They prompt and encourage protective action to minimise the social and economic impacts of an emergency. Warnings are an essential element of effective emergency management.
2.	Empowering: The provision of warnings enacts a national commitment to building shared responsibility for disaster resilience, by empowering people to make decisions about their own safety
3.	Trusted, authoritative and verifiable: For greatest effect, warnings must come from a trusted source and be verifiable through multiple channels. Warnings should therefore be easily and widely shared to recognise the diversity of potential trusted sources. The official authority issuing a warning should always be clearly stated.
4.	Scaled based on risk: Scaled warning frameworks should guide the delivery of all warnings and support the consistent risk assessment of a hazard, its impact and its consequence.
5.	Timely, targeted and tailored: Warnings should be timely, targeted to communities at risk and tailored to provide detail and relevance. Specific consideration should be given to harder to reach and vulnerable members of the community.
6.	Conveying impact: Warnings should describe the expected impacts and consequences of an approaching or current hazard, to assist people to understand and be motivated to take protective action.
7.	Including a call-to-action: Warnings should include practical calls-to-action using language tailored to the level of risk, ranging from advice and persuasive recommendations to authoritative direction.
8.	Clearly communicated: Warnings should be easy to understand and use a consistent structure to provide information. Both written and visual information should be considered to assist with clearly conveying risk and encouraging protective action.
9.	Readily accessible: Warnings should be disseminated via multiple channels, tailored to suit each channel, and consider accessibility for diverse audiences. Ease of sharing and rapid dissemination should be supported with use of nationally agreed technical standards, and dissemination strategies should be in place to adapt to failure of technology or other systems.
10.	Part of a bigger picture: Warnings are one component within a systems-based approach to community safety. Community engagement, education and awareness programs better prepare communities to receive, understand and act upon warnings.

Table 2 - Australia's warning principles

³ Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, (2018). Public Information and Warnings Handbook, p8.

2.2 A total warning system



Figure 2 - Australia's Total Warning System

A total warning system describes a means of collecting information about an impending emergency, understanding the nature of the threat, communicating that information to those likely to be affected by it, and facilitating protective action and timely response (Mileti & Sorensen 1990; Sorensen 2000).

Australia's Total Warning System defines the essential elements of delivering warnings effectively, with a lifecycle of action before, during and after emergency. It is made possible with commitment to a partnership approach across agencies and with communities⁴.

2.3 Further reading

For detailed insights into public information and warnings visit the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience by visiting <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/public-information-and-warnings-handbook/>

⁴ Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, (2018). Public Information and Warnings Handbook, p10.

PART 3: PUBLIC INFORMATION VERSES WARNINGS

3.1 Public Information⁵

Definition: is information provided to the public immediately before, during and after an emergency to reduce the potential impact of an emergency or hazard.

Public information undertakes three key functions:

1. Creation and dissemination of information
2. Managing contact from the media and public
3. Consulting and liaising with affected communities

In an approaching or current emergency, communities require a wide range of information including, but not limited to, official warnings. This might include, for example, general information about the nature of an approaching hazard, information on looking after your health during an emergency, forthcoming community meetings, local resources, relief and recovery services. **Warning messages are often presented separately to more detailed public information about an emergency to ensure they remain easily identifiable and understood.**

3.2 Warning⁶

Definition: point-in-time information about a hazard that is impacting or is expected to impact communities. Warnings describe the impact and expected consequences for communities and include advice on what people should do.

The decision to warn should be based on risk, which requires an assessment of hazard, vulnerability, and exposure. Practically this indicates that warnings need to consider the community that is likely to be impacted by the disaster and that arbitrary triggers based on hazard alone may not be as effective compared to consideration of the tri-risk approach.



Figure 3 - Tri-risk approach diagrammatically

⁵ Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, (2018). Public Information and Warnings Handbook, p2, p7.

⁶ Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, (2018). Public Information and Warnings Handbook, p2.

PART 4: PROVISION OF WARNINGS

4.1 The role of the LDMG

The *Disaster Management Act 2003* Section 23(f) and 30(e) both state that one of the functions of the LDMG and the District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) respectively is:

'... to ensure the community is aware of the ways of mitigating the adverse effects of an event, and preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster.'

4.2 Australia's Warning System⁷

A warning provides point-in-time information about a hazard that is impacting or is expected to impact communities. It describes the impact and expected consequences for communities and includes advice on what people should do.

The Australian Warning System has been designed based on feedback and research across the country and aims to deliver a more consistent approach to emergency warnings, no matter where you are. It uses a nationally consistent set of icons to show incidents on websites and apps, supported by calls to action.

The AWS uses a nested model to optimise the effectiveness of warnings. This model contains a warning level, hazard/location, and an action statement.



4.3 Levels of warning

The City of Ipswich LDMG (and Ipswich City Council) adopts the national tiered arrangements related to warnings. This is consistent with the intent of the Queensland Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Disaster Management Guidelines.

There are three warning levels:

- 1. Advice:** An incident has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.

⁷ Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, (2020). Australian Warning System. Online at: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/australian-warning-system/> [Accessed 26/07/2021]

2. **Watch and Act:** There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.
3. **Emergency Warning:** is the highest level of warning. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.

4.3.1 'Advice' warning level

Advice

Calls to action

- Prepare now
- Stay informed
- Monitor conditions
- Stay informed/threat is reduced
- Avoid the area

Indicative Timeframe

- Impact to the community is estimated at 6 – 24 hours

Advice icons



Storm



Cyclone



Fire



Heatwave



Flooding



Other

Colour palette

C 3 M 7 Y 91 K 0 | R 251 G 224 B 50 | HEX # fbe032

4.3.2 'Watch and Act' warning level

Watch and Act

Calls to action

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to leave/evacuate • Leave/evacuate now (if you are not prepared) • Prepare to take shelter • Move/stay indoors • Stay near shelter • Walk two or more streets back • Monitor conditions as they are changing • Be aware of ember attack • Move to higher ground (away from creeks/rivers/coast) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit time outside (cyclone, heat, asthma) • Avoid the area/avoid the flooded area • Stay away from damaged buildings and other hazards • Prepare for isolation • Protect yourself against the impacts of extreme heat • Do not enter flood water |
|---|--|

Indicative Timeframe

- Impact to the community is estimated at 6 – 12 hours

Watch and Act icons



Storm



Cyclone



Fire



Heatwave



Flooding



Other

Colour palette

C O M 65 Y 100 K 0 | R 255 G 121 B 0 | HEX # ff7900

4.3.3 'Emergency Warning' warning level

Emergency Warning

Calls to action

- Leave/evacuate (immediately, by am/pm/hazard timing)
- Seek/take shelter now
- Shelter indoors now
- Too late/dangerous to leave

Indicative Timeframe

- Impact to the community is estimated at 0 – 6 hours

Emergency Warning icons



Storm



Cyclone



Fire



Heatwave



Flooding



Other

Colour palette

C 9 M 100 Y 91 K 2 | R 214 G 0 B 28 | HEX # d6001c

4.4 Warning approval and communication

The Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC), deputy LDC or Incident Controller should approve the issue of all warnings. In doing so where, possible the LDCC will:

- Ensure stakeholders have the information they need to respond appropriately to the warning be issued (for example, residents and visitors should be alerted as to which roads and bridges to avoid after a severe weather event, and when infrastructure is expected to be operational again);
- Ensure the ongoing flow of accurate information throughout the initial response period of the crisis; and
- Ensure that messages have been received by all relevant agencies, warning of the evacuation.

4.5 Warning – Notification and dissemination channels

This section is replicated from the LDMP

The LDMG is responsible for ensuring the community is aware of ways to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster.⁸ This involves raising awareness of identified threats and the means by which the public should respond at an individual and/or household level. It may also include warnings and directions, as provided by primary agencies relating to the specific hazard.

The Chairperson of the LDMG (or delegate) is the official source of public and media information for the group's coordination and support activities. Primary and functional lead agencies provide media liaison for issues relating to their organisational roles. Individual organisations maintain responsibility for internal reporting on their business in accordance with their established procedures.

Community members may receive warnings and information from several different channels and sources – some official, some not. A summary of the most common sources and channels are detailed below.

4.5.1 Family, friends, and neighbours

Family, friends and neighbours are an extremely powerful source of warning information. However, this information should always be verified through official sources. All members of the community are encouraged to check on family, friends and neighbours and to share official warnings with them.

4.5.2 Social media, websites, and notification services

Facebook and Twitter are the two most common social media platforms used by disaster management organisations in Queensland. A search of each of these platforms by organisation name will assist in obtaining relevant information. Social media feeds are available from Qld.gov.au/alerts and Council's [Disaster Dashboard](#) for those who do not subscribe to social media platforms.

4.5.3 Emergency Alert

Emergency Alert (EA) is the national telephone warning system used by emergency services and Council to send voice messages (to landlines) and text messages (to mobile phones) within a defined area about likely or actual emergencies. The Emergency Alert system will only be used in dangerous situations where there is likely to be an impact on human life. It relies on telecommunications networks to send messages, and message delivery cannot be guaranteed.⁹

⁸ Section 30, Disaster Management Act 2003, Functions

⁹ Australian Government, Emergency Alert, emergencyalert.gov.au/

4.5.4 Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS)

When disasters loom or a major emergency happens, residents will be alerted by the sound of the SEWS before critical television or radio broadcasts. The SEWS is a wailing siren sound used throughout Australia for various emergency events of major significance, such as cyclones, flooding and severe storms. When community members hear the signal, they should pay careful attention to the message that follows and act immediately on the advice given. There are strict rules on the use of this warning signal in Queensland.¹⁰

4.5.5 Mainstream media (radio, television and newspapers)

The use of mainstream media is essential for the provision of emergency warnings. Mainstream media channels are generally very proactive in the monitoring of official sources.

¹⁰ Queensland Government, [Disaster.qld.gov.au](https://www.disaster.qld.gov.au)

PART 5: PROVISION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public information, is information provided to the public immediately before, during and after an emergency to reduce the potential impact of an emergency or hazard. This may include information such as:

- Reports on the status of the event
- Broader community impact
- Information regarding recovery efforts
- How to provide assistance to self, family and friends
- Which agencies are providing assistance, and where to go to access it.

5.1 Prepare

Where Council is the lead or primary agency, it is Council's responsibility to disseminate public information in an effective and timely manner. It is important, as with the development of warnings, that the information prepared is accurate and consistent across all agencies engaged in actions in response to the event or threat.

5.2 Approval

As with the provision of warnings, all information being released by Council in the event of a disaster situation should be approved by the LDC, deputy LDC or Incident Controller prior to distribution.

5.3 Release

After being approved by the LDC, the information should be released through the most appropriate channels available at the time. This includes the disaster dashboard.

5.4 Preparedness - notification and dissemination sources and channels

This section is replicated from the LDMP.

5.4.1 Bureau of Meteorology

Warning products issued by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) include severe weather warnings, heatwave warnings, tropical cyclone advice and tsunami warnings. The community is encouraged to subscribe to these. Monitoring may also occur through Bom.gov.au/ or through the BoM App available from the Google Play Store or Apple Store.

5.4.2 Disaster Dashboard

Ipswich City Council's Disaster Dashboard provides the Ipswich community with a comprehensive and user-friendly platform for accessing information on the status of events in Ipswich. It includes

emergency news, road conditions, weather warnings, power outages and other information. To view the dashboard, visit Disaster.ipswich.qld.gov.au.

5.4.3 My Ipswich Alerts

As part of Ipswich City Council's commitment to community safety and wellbeing, it has teamed up with the Early Warning Network (EWN) to provide residents with early warning alerts for potentially dangerous weather and bushfires within the City of Ipswich. Council encourages residents to become familiar with potential hazards and risks and take early action where needed. The EWN alerts are provided through Council's innovative *My Ipswich Alerts* platform, a free service enabling the community to be instantly updated via email or smartphone app with warnings and information about emergency and disaster events in the greater Ipswich region. To opt in for this service or find out information, visit ipswich.qld.gov.au/myipswichalerts or search the Google Play Store or Apple Store for *My Ipswich Alerts*.

5.4.4 Seqwater notification service

Seqwater manages three gated dams (Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams) in South East Queensland, these dams provide water to 3.1 million people in the region. Seqwater provides information on planned releases of water from the dams in addition to other notices. For more information visit Seqwater.com.au/dam-release-information-service.

PART 6: MONITORING

During all stages of a disaster event, Council acting in its capacity within the LDMG will conduct monitoring activities across several different mediums, to ensure that the most accurate and up-to-date information is able to be accessed.

6.1 Social Media

Social Media can be an invaluable tool during disaster events; providing a convenient, easily accessed platform for the quick and effective dissemination of information to a mass audience. However, the accessibility of social media can also mean that incorrect information is easily spread. It is therefore imperative that social media channels be monitored, and corrections offered wherever possible.

In engaging with a social media audience, Council should act in the best interests of the wider community, providing feedback that mitigates any undue concern caused by inaccuracies. Warnings and emergency messages should be reinforced by formal language and strong calls to action where required, to ensure that the urgency of the situation is appropriately promoted.



Social media will work best with an audience that is already well engaged in the online presence. It is worth considering that social media in the emergency management space should be utilised on a regular basis outside of disaster situations, to ensure that the audience will be there when it really counts.

6.1.1 Mythbusting

Social media platforms are extremely responsive, with channels of information able to spread exponentially across different demographics within very short timeframes. It is extremely important that rumours and incorrect information be corrected as quickly as possible, and in a polite and friendly manner suitable to the platform.

6.2 Official Channels

Information coming through official channels should be monitored by Council during an event to ensure that any unfolding events or sudden changes are accurately and appropriately communicated.

Disaster events can unfold swiftly, and primary agencies may not have time to update the LDCC while they are amid coordinating their response. As such it is important that Council conducts its own monitoring to ensure the best chance of gaining all possible information regarding an

unfolding event in as timely a manner as possible, regardless of whether individual agencies are able to provide direct updates through the LDCC.

There are several different agencies, service providers, and other associated entities that Council may need to contact during a disaster event.

PART 7: ANNEXURES

7.1 Annexure 1 – Schedule of Tables and Figures

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