City of Ipswich
Local Disaster Management Sub Plan

Public Information and Warnings

A3980098: April 2018

Approval and Endorsement

Approved by resolution at the Infrastructure and Emergency Management Committee No. 2018(04) of 16 April 2018 and Council Ordinary Meeting of 23 April 2018.

Endorsement by the City of Ipswich Local Disaster Management Group Meeting of 15 May 2018.
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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.

1.2 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.

Each disaster event is unique and adaptations to this material will required on a case by case basis.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this sub plan is to provide a framework in the provision 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.

1.4 Key Objectives

The key objectives of this sub plan is to:

- Detail the arrangements related to public information
- Detail the arrangements related to the issue of warnings

1.5 Continuous Improvement

This document will be reviewed at least annually 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 Principal Officer (Emergency Management).

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1 Section 59, Disaster Management Act 2003, Reviewing and Renewing (the) Plan
It is acknowledged that feedback from stakeholders is essential. Proposals for amendments or inclusions can be addressed in writing to:

Post
Chief Executive Officer
Attention: Emergency Management Unit
Ipswich City Council
PO Box 191, Ipswich QLD 4305

Email  council@ipswich.qld.gov.au

Figure 1 – Continuous Improvement Cycle

1.6 Amendment Register

Major document review history is maintained through Council’s internal electronic document management system. Table 1 outlines minor and inconsequential amendments that have occurred between major reviews or amendments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vers</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Approved and endorsed version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>Feb 2019</td>
<td>Annual review – minor and inconsequential amendments – update to template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>21 May 2019</td>
<td>Minor and inconsequential amendments including amendments to reflect consolidated warnings principles released by Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1 – Amendment Register
PART 2: PUBLIC INFORMATION VERSES WARNINGS

2.1 Public Information

**Definition:** Public information is the provision of focussed communication with the community for the incident through gathering, assembling and disseminating accurate, relevant, timely information to the public and other stakeholders outside the incident management team.²

Public information undertakes three key functions:
1. Disseminating information
2. Managing contact from the media and public
3. Consulting and liaising with affected communities

2.2 Warning

**Definition:** An emergency warning is a message signalling an imminent hazard, which may include advice on protective measures.³

The Australian Government’s Attorney-General’s Department, Emergency Warning Arrangements (2013) states:

> The purpose of an emergency warning is to inform the community of an impending or current threat and to prompt an appropriate response or action. The action that is required of the community is usually contained in the warning message, for example, ‘seek further information’, ‘take shelter’, or ‘activate your emergency plan’.

Emergency warnings are a primary tool for disaster management and play a significant role in the protection and resilience of Australian communities. Emergency warnings have the potential to significantly reduce the impact of disasters on communities, properties and the environment when they are combined with the community’s understanding of environmental risks and disaster preparedness.

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² Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, IMS Directive 06.01.00 (Version 1 29/01/2016)
PART 3: PROVISION OF WARNINGS

A warning is a message that informs and enables individuals and communities to take appropriate action in response to an impending hazard. It is important that a variety of warning dissemination methods are utilised to ensure broad distribution of warning messages. A range of methods of warning dissemination will ensure coverage of differing demographics, geographic locations, and time of day.

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.’

When at risk areas and the location of safer areas have been determined, the decision to evacuate at risk members of the community can be made. This information needs to be communicated to the community.

The process for the notification and dissemination of warnings is not a function dependent on the activation of the LDMG; rather it should be the automatic responsibility of LDMG members, regardless of the status of activation of the LDMG. It is each organisation’s responsibility to disseminate its own warnings as per internal organisational procedures.

Consideration should be given to the specific needs of the exposed population with particular consideration of special needs groups and how the dissemination of warnings will be best achieved to reach these groups.

3.1 The Stages of Warning

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

Each level has a colour and symbol assigned, these colours are aligned to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Bushfire Warnings. In the absence of guidelines in Queensland, the symbols are aligned to those used by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV).

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4 Queensland Government Queensland Evacuation Guidelines for Disaster Management Groups
5 Queensland Government Queensland Evacuation Guidelines for Disaster Management Groups
6 Ipswich City Council Local Disaster Management Plan Version 3.01 February 2016
7 Queensland Government Queensland Evacuation Guidelines for Disaster Management Groups
Advice

- Advise messages should be titled **STAY INFORMED**
- An incident is occurring or has occurred in the area
- Access information and monitor conditions
- Impact to the community is estimated at 6 – 24 hours

Watch and Act

- Watch and Act messages should be titled **PREPARE TO LEAVE** or **LEAVE NOW**
- An emergency is heading towards you
- Conditions are changing and you need to take action now to protect yourself and your family
- Impact to the community is estimated at 6 – 12 hours

Emergency Warning

- Emergency Warnings should be titled **LEAVE IMMEDIATELY** or **SEEK SHELTER**
- You are in imminent danger and need to take action now
- You will be impacted
- Impact to the community is estimated at 0 – 6 hours

Figure 2 – Stages of Warning

3.2 National Warning Principles and Processes


1. **Life-saving 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.

### 3.3 Warning Approval

The Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) should approve the issue of all warnings. When a decision to evacuate has been made, the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC) and the LDC should:

- Ensure stakeholders have the information they need to respond appropriately to the disaster (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.

### 3.4 Warning – Notification and Dissemination

*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, for warnings relating to the particular hazard.

Under this plan, 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 will provide media liaison for issues relative to their organisational role/s. Individual organisations maintain responsibility for internal reporting on their business in accordance with their established procedures.

Community members may receive warnings and information from a number of different sources—some official, some not. They may include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Neighbours</th>
<th>Media Releases</th>
<th>River 949 Radio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Emergency Management Dashboard</td>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>612 ABC Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Emergency Warning Signal</td>
<td>Emergency Alert</td>
<td>TV Broadcast</td>
<td>Door-Knocking</td>
<td>My Ipswich Alerts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 – Sources of warnings and information

3.4.1 Family, friends and neighbours

Family, friends and neighbours are an extremely powerful source of warning information. However, this information should always be verified by official sources.

All members of the community are encouraged to check on family, friends and neighbours and to share official warnings with them.

3.4.2 Social media, website and notification services

Facebook and Twitter are the two most common social media platforms used by disaster management organisations in Queensland. A search each of these platforms by organisation name will assist in obtaining relevant information. Social media feeds are available from [http://qldalerts.com](http://qldalerts.com) and Council’s Emergency Management Dashboard for those currently not subscribed to social media platforms.

Detailed contact information, including websites is provided at the front of the LDMP.

\(^8\) Section 30, Disaster Management Act 2003, Functions
My Ipswich Alerts, dam release notifications and the Emergency Management Dashboard are explained in Part 5: Preparedness.

3.4.3 Emergency Alert

Emergency Alert 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.

Only in dangerous situations where there is likely impact of human life will the Emergency Alert system be used.

It should be recognised that Emergency Alert is one way of warning communities. It relies on telecommunications networks to send messages, and message delivery cannot be guaranteed.  

3.4.4 Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS)

When disasters loom or a major emergency happens, residents will be alerted by the sound of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS).

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 on radio or television, 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.

3.4.5 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.

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PART 4: PROVISION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public information, for the purpose of this document, is considered to be any information other than warnings that is provided to the community in the wake of a disaster event. This may include information such as:

- Reports on the current status of the event,
- Information regarding recovery efforts,
- When it will be safe to return,
- Which agencies are providing assistance, and where to go to access it.

4.1 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.

4.2 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 prior to distribution.

4.3 Release

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

4.4 Preparedness - Notification and Dissemination

This section is replicated from the LDMP.

4.4.1 Bureau of Meteorology

Warning products issued by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) include severe weather warning, tropical cyclone advice and tsunami warnings. The LDMG can subscribe to these.

Member organisations and community members can also monitor weather situations through http://www.bom.gov.au/ or download the BoM App from Google Play Store or Apple Store.

4.4.2 Emergency Management Dashboard

Ipswich City Council’s Emergency Management Dashboard provides the Ipswich Community with a comprehensive and user-friendly platform for accessing information on the current status of events in Ipswich. It includes emergency news, road conditions, weather warnings, power outages and more. The Emergency Management Dashboard is the community’s link to emergency management information. To view the dashboard visit: http://emd.ipswich.qld.gov.au.
4.4.3  My Ipswich Alerts

As part of Ipswich City Council’s commitment to community safety and wellbeing, it has teamed up 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, SMS or smartphone app with warnings and information about disaster and emergency events in the greater Ipswich region.

To opt in for this service or find out information visit: [http://ipswich.qld.gov.au/myipswichalerts](http://ipswich.qld.gov.au/myipswichalerts) or download the My Ipswich Alerts App from Google Play Store or Apple Store.

4.4.4 Dam release notification service


4.4.5 LDMG and member organisation responsibilities

The LDMG has established notification and dissemination process to allow communication between member organisations. This process takes into account the time restrictions of rapid onset events such as dam failures.

Council as the Secretariat does not use the LDMG notification system to send out any publically available warnings or notifications to member organisations. Member organisations are required to subscribe and manage their subscription to these services themselves.
PART 5: 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.

5.1 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.

The aspiration for social media is that the public is well informed, not over informed.

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.

![Note]

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.

5.1.1 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.

5.2 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 in the midst of 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 6: ANNEXURES

6.1 Annexure 1 – Schedule of Tables and Figures

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6.2 Annexure 2 – Generalised Advice Messages

It is important that information disseminated to the public prior to, during, and after a disaster event is consistent and easily understood. The preparation of clear messages is of utmost importance. Appropriate measures should be taken when planning for possible events, to ensure that key messages are suitably formulated for distribution to the LDCC, disaster response teams, and the general public.

Several key messages that should be reinforced to members of the public are:

- Keep listening to local radio or television stations.
- If authorities tell you to evacuate do so immediately, taking your emergency kit.
- If you have more time, prepare your home and/or business.
- Prepare to be self-sufficient for three days.
- Do not return to your home until authorities deem it safe to do so.
- Follow your home emergency plan.
- Be vigilant to all hazards.
- Do not use candles at home due to the associated fire risk.
- Generators should not be used indoors due to the risk of illness and/or death due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Warning templates need to be populated with the following information:

- What is happening
- When will it happen
- What people have to do in order to maximise their safety
- The evacuation route/s showing where they should go
- Transportation assistance services available to people without means to travel
- When the evacuation will be happening
- Which assembly areas and evacuation centres will be used
- How long they are likely to be away from their residence
- What to pack
- Which agencies will be assisting with the evacuation
- Where to access more information
- Potential hazards that they may face during the evacuation