

“Breaching the Barriers to Effective Flood Risk Management” - Workshop highlights

1 CONTEXT

The Community of Practice in integrated Flood Risk Management (iFRM) in Queensland hosted a workshop forum on Wednesday 29 October 2014. In collaboration with the QUT, School of Civil Engineering & Built Environment, this workshop was designed to:

1. explore the cross-cultural perspectives to mobilizing support for integrated floodplain planning and management using a Queensland and a Dutch comparison to stimulate the workshop
2. recognise the embedded values in the planning and risk management approaches observed within professional, political and social contexts for implementation a local flood risk management program
3. identify the existing barriers to effective implementation of flood planning measures and then discuss ways in which these barriers can be overcome

A group of 22 participants came together – a mix of State and Local government representatives, researchers from QUT, Regional NRM officers and private sector professionals. The various insights and documented highlights represent a package of experiences and wisdom that is offered as shared advice for any entities active in integrated Flood Risk Management.

The following highlights are a summary of the three parts of the workshop.

2 KEY MESSAGES FROM GUEST SPEAKERS

The presentations of the key speakers – Stephen Dredge “Observations from Current Queensland Experience” and Hans Oerlemans “Flood Management in the Netherlands” both provide expanded details on how to overcome the barriers to effective flood risk management. Both talks will be available at <http://www.watercentre.org/services/communities-of-practice/flood-community-of-practice>.

Summaries from each speaker considered the following issues:

Stephen Dredge – Managing Consultant Asia Pacific, MWH - concluded that overcoming the barriers for effective planning and implementation requires Queensland floodplain managers to pro-actively balance:

- community expectations with technical reality
- releasing information with communication strategy
- providing best practice without locally specific policy & direction from the State
- managing existing risks in contrast to future risks

- project needs with available funding
- legal and governance obligations to a Council organisations with the flood risks that face the local community

Hans Oerlemans, Manager – Landscape Architecture, RPS - concluded that the Dutch experience has evolved over the years, such that effective flood risk management is now based on:

- not a disaster driven approach but all solutions based on anticipated and forecasted climate change based scenarios
- an integrated joint approach to floods and water shortage
- a philosophy of “Move with water, not against it” and the use of solutions that “Build with nature”
- clear responsibilities for all entities
- national and local programs locked-in through laws and funds
- management that is done together as collaboration is essential

3 PANEL SESSION

Stimulated by the two guest speakers, a group discussion with input from our panel guests Susanne Cooper – Principal Sustainability Strategist at Jacobs - David Corkill – Principal Planner, Buckley Vann - identified the following issue that flood risk management in Queensland needs to consider:

- The end vision for a flood affected area and identify the steps/pathway to get there
- Integration and collaboration is core to any iFRM plan or program
- A FRM program needs to be considered as a holistic approach, often a lead officer co-ordinates the approach across an organisation, and as the implementation is underway adaptive adjustments can be made
- The ongoing devolution of the funding responsibility down to local government is problematic
- The roles and responsibilities among all entities across the State need to be sorted
- Political traction (at all levels) and involvement needs to be sustained
- Flooding is presented to the community through a risk communication perspective and the messaging is an ongoing task to ensure the issue is kept on the agenda
- Long term community memory on floods may be missing in some communities and there is a need to establish and sustain flood history information
- Building and achieving community trust on unfamiliar flood scenarios needs to be done skillfully
- Transparency in the way flood information is produced, shared and circulated within a community is vital
- Post a major event need to learn what worked well and what can be done better next time and to avoid a focus that is about fault and blame
- Better recognition and involvement of local community leaders in the preparation for and recovery from floods
- Frustration and concerns from legal issues and injurious affection continue to dampen the extent of some necessary changes to planning schemes

4 WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

From the broad set of issues three topics were chosen as being topical as barriers to effective iFRM. Small group then detailed particular aspects of each issue to better represent the nature of the problem and ways to overcome these barriers.

4.1 ISSUE 1— COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

Why is it a problem?

- directly affects a relatively small part of the community over a short period
- Unable to get the facts out to the public (as impacts on property values, compensation/liability)
- Only look at the negative impacts of flood

What are some alternative ways to circumvent the problem?

- More collaboration between stakeholders and the right stakeholders
- Better utilising the media and different mediums
- Give people the 'right' to the facts and governments the protection from liabilities
- Better promotion or capture of flood history
- Capture the true cost of flooding (indirect and well as direct cost across a range services)

How can effective community communication be implemented?

- Clear government roles and responsibilities
- Bring the community on the journey for flood mitigation in a transparent manner
- Education about flood (positive, negative, options etc)
- Encourage all people in flood area to improve flood resilience, therefore these people need the 'tools' to be able to do this (e.g. guidelines)

4.2 ISSUE 2 — COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Aspects of the stakeholders to acknowledge and overcome

- Dealing with difficult people
- Rivalries, politics and personalities
- Many-many stakeholders with diverse views
- Diverse policies, politics and budgets
- People have emotional and economic interests in the outcomes and will be heavily invested in the outcomes

Process and logistic issues to considered

- Knowing when collaboration should occur?
- Knowing the right people to collaborate with?
- Timeframe challenges

- Challenge of meaningful inclusion of data/information
- A “Design and defend” mentality, where collaboration is sought after the completion of a design phase, can be difficult if genuine collaboration is sought
- Logistical challenge of collaboration facilitation
- Watershed/catchment boundaries don’t always align neatly with State/LGA/water utility. And then when changes happen in the focus of an organisation how do they and others sustain meaningful collaboration
- It takes time and people want to see results now, despite the slow delivery of measures such as mitigation solutions

Key beneficial steps

- Need to clearly understand why you are collaborating as a collaborator
- Process needs to be meaningful and transparent
- Give collaborators the opportunity to inform the problem/issue identification
- Ensure vertical and horizontal integration between organisations
- Early engagement with stakeholders helps to build acceptance and ownership

4.3 ISSUE 3 – IMPLEMENTING A FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

What is the problem?

- There is a lack of an integrated and holistic framework at the State level
- The National SCARM handbook on FRM was long out of date and the new national handbook has only just been adopted earlier this year.
- There are gaps and poor alignment between building regulation requirements and planning scheme requirements
- There are inconsistencies both in the approach to FRM and follow on consequence between many of the Local Governments
- Too many specific issue guiding documents and a mismatch in priorities
- Biggest issue is the council implementation program and the level of understanding of the FRM issue
- A vulnerability in the ability to respond appears to be apparent for many Councils and it varies depending on the context of the flood risk and where in Queensland they are located

Solutions

- Some form State agreed approach that guides an authority/local Council on iFRM
- Establish consistency across jurisdictions
- For each particular setting enable/guide the best fit type of modelling
- The benefit of this State and/or Federal lead framework that is suitable for implementation at a local scale is that it would better guide Local Government decisions
- State guidelines on specific FRM issues are an important addition to the framework
- Consider catchment authorities for each different part of the State to enable the coordination required

- Increased shared collaboration between local governments to share the development of technical solutions

Opportunity enabler

- Create a business case which looks at the whole cost of a poor floodplain management scenario to support the case for increased funding and a higher priority for improved integrated floodplain management

5 NEXT STEPS

These highlights will be shared with the broader group of 200 plus participants in the Community of Practices and along with the presentation the highlights will be published on our website.

Various SEQ and other regional iFRM initiatives that are underway will be offered the finding from the workshop as topical advice. Through our association with the Floodplain Management Association we are also able to share these insights with other Queensland Local Government FMA members.

The issues raised represent an initial insight into the topic of “Breaching the Barriers to Effective Flood Risk Management” and where possible will be used as an input to any further development on ways to make iFRM more effective in Queensland.

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