

WHY 'COMMUNITY
INFRASTRUCTURE' NEEDS
HARD FUNDING:
CASE STUDY OF DESIGNING
FLOOD RESPONSES IN WEST
END 2011

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When trauma hits, individuals can self-organise as neighbours to assist each other. This scale of organisation is not effective however when the trauma is more widespread, affecting whole neighbourhoods. **Above the scale of street-level**, the community infrastructure embedded in that community plays a vital role.



**Ryan Street, West End
Brisbane Times photo**

‘Community infrastructure’ refers to community organisations, networks and community resources which provide the enabling conditions for communities to act in concert

West End flood

Floodwater inundated
2132 residences in 21
streets, many households
are still re-building

Major disruption: no power
for five days across most
of West End

http://skypepics.com.au/pages/browse.php?img_id=16104

Floodwaters knocked
out basements and
ground floors of
apartment buildings,
displacing residents
for weeks / months

Floodwaters inundated
warehouses, light industry and
commercial buildings

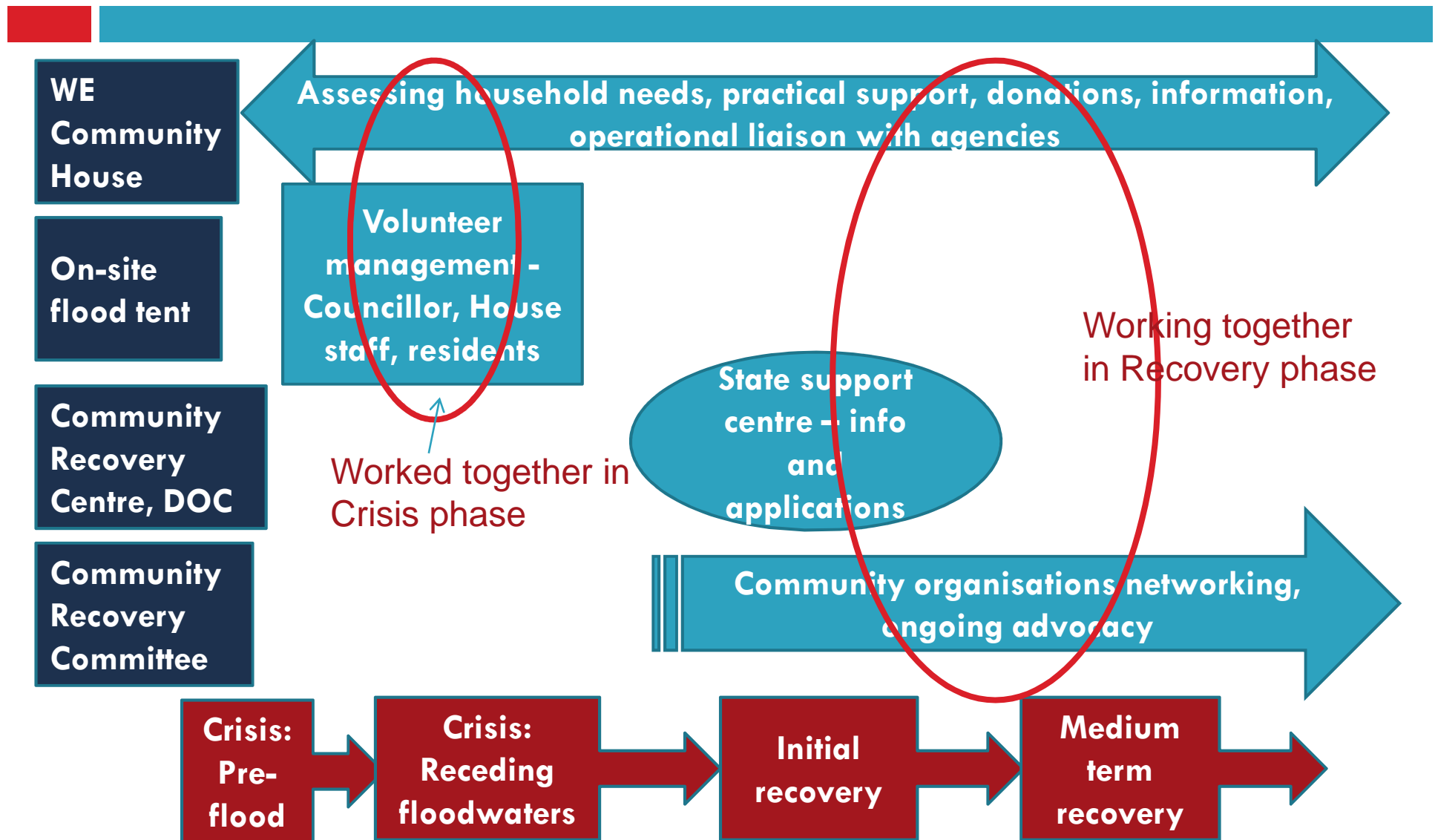


The 'community infrastructure' of West End



- ❑ West End Community House
- ❑ Councillor-residents-WECH tent on-site in the flood zone for the 3 days (Friday to Sunday) of crisis and cleanup
- ❑ Flood Recovery Committee comprising 12 organisations / representatives including:
 - ❑ Local Councillor, WECH, WE State School P&C, Brisbane State HS P&C, Kummara Aboriginal Association, LifeChurch, resident representatives from apartments and houses, West End Community Association, Greek Community (AHEPA), MICAH
- ❑ Community Recovery Centre (temporary), Dept of Communities
- ❑ Extensive networks of business and residents built over many years

The crisis response and recovery process – role of community infrastructure



Some statistics about the crisis and response in this part of Brisbane

- The suburbs of South Brisbane and West End suffered significant damage and loss during the January flood. The Courier Mail has reported that some 2132 residences in 21 streets were affected by inundation, either fully, partially or were rendered uninhabitable due to a lack of access to upper floors of the building.
- Information about the total number of businesses who were impacted by the event has yet to be tallied, however we are aware it is a significant number, many of whom are still working towards re-opening.
- West End Community House worked in the first weeks after the flood to coordinate crisis assistance for local residents. This included working with some 1380 or more volunteers to offer more than 6000 hours of labour and support during the fortnight following the event.

West End Community House – one part of the
community infrastructure



West End and the 2011 Flood – the role of community infrastructure – the crisis

THE CRISIS RESPONSE PHASE



West End Community House, as a community centre, provided immediate staff resources to assist in crisis response (15 unpaid staff days over first three weeks)

Used existing local relationships and connections assisted to build available resources by harnessing local skilled volunteers (hundreds of hours of local residents volunteerism in first two weeks)

Used local knowledge and connections to assist the community to ensure that most vulnerable and hardest hit were identified and supported

Used existing local relationships and connections to harness available resources, especially local skilled volunteers (hundreds of hours of local residents volunteerism in first two weeks)

Provided a local point for donations and in-kind support to be collated and distributed



West End and the 2011 Flood – the role of community infrastructure - Recovery

THE RECOVERY PHASE

The WE Community House was involved in:

Collection of ~\$8000 through the House's Flood Appeal fund, distribution of monies to P&Cs of Dutton Park, St Itas and West End State School

On-going distribution of material assistance to local residents

Tailored the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service to assist tenants, particularly in unscrupulous landlord cases

Needs assessment of impacted households through street surveys, calls, etc

Communication with impacted households via Newsletter drops and local events

On-going support for the operation of the Community Recovery Committee

On-going targeted emotional support for most vulnerable residents

Advocacy for the needs of impacted households to three levels of Government

Operational liaison with community and government agencies around recovery

Support for local business "bounce back" campaigns

Community Recovery Committee - Groups with specific needs & representative organisations



1. Residents (WE Community Association, Kummara, MICAH)
 1. Apartments – body corporate issues, insurance, access and liability, Houses, Hostels
2. Families with school-age children (P&C Association)
3. Businesses (West End Traders Association)
 1. light industry, warehousing, commercial, retail
4. Special needs groups / vulnerable / mental health / housing (MICAH Projects, WECH, Greek Community)

Recovery process: community infrastructure in action



**Eyes and Ears
-Community
listening
post**



**Channelling
information**



**Making right
connections**

**Matching big
volunteer
effort to
needs of
businesses
and residents**



**Supporting
/ helping
hand**

**Collecting
and
distributing
resources,
Appeal
Fund
donations**

Advocacy



Potential role of West End Community House in ongoing Flood Recovery

Objectives:

- Provide direct services which we are contracted for
- Facilitate community capacity building
- Facilitate community self-organisation
- Other?

| Sources | Facilitation work of House | Direct Services of House |
|---------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
|---------|----------------------------|--------------------------|

- Commonwealth Agencies support
- State agencies
 - Housing
 - Community recovery
 - Health
- NGO services
 - Rotary etc
 - Church congregations
 - Caxton Street legal
 - MICAH
 - etc
- Electorate office(s)
- Local community, P&C, streets, unit blocks



• Information

- Monitoring, information gathering**
 - Vulnerable population / flooded
 - Community's self-organising initiatives
- Communication** – targeted, useful
FAQs answered, connections made:
 - Website
 - Newsletter
 - Phone / point of contact
- Connecting**
 - InterAgency network
 - Community groups
 - Meeting spaces
 - Support for forums e.g. body corporates, small business,
 - WE Community Recovery Committee
- Organising resources**
 - Volunteers
 - Corporate support
 - Appeal Fund – collecting donations
 - Big charities



• Staff
• Volunteers? **House needs additional capacity**

- Government funded TAAS (4 people)**
 - Tenancy advice and advocacy
 - One to one
 - Boarders' breakfasts

- Government funded Community and Individual Support Program (1 person)**
 - Weekly groups
 - Boarders' breakfast



• Staff
• Volunteers?

Adverse trends impacting on community infrastructure



Council and State approach to community infrastructure

- Brisbane City Council budget has dramatically reduced allocation to community development over last 8 years.
- Jan 2011, only 2 community development workers for whole of Brisbane
- State Government focus is less about place-based community programs. Emphasis has moved to larger, service-focused programs with large State-wide providers, little emphasis on grass roots capacity or infrastructure

Disaster relief funds not supportive – two negative features

1. **No disaster relief funding** available to local community infrastructure, no applications process (at time of writing)
2. Commonwealth funding for Disaster Relief has focused on City-wide community recovery through grant to BCC, with **no evidence of requirements in relation to grass roots community infrastructure support**



**Future work by the
neighbourhood centre:**

**Community infrastructure needs
hard funding**

1. RESIDENT SUPPORT

- Provide direct assistance to flood impacted residents as they work towards recovery. This would include, but would not be limited to:
 - Co-ordinate offers of volunteers support for impacted households
 - Co-ordinate offers of material assistance for impacted households
- Broker appropriate personal support for residents from community and government agencies
- Practical support – generators, gurneys, access to tradies
- Provide stream of relevant information – government support, centres, donations
- Ensure ongoing communication with affected residents through publications and outreach activities
- Advocate for emerging and changing community needs through the recovery process

Anticipated Outcomes – Resident Support

- Local residents are linked to appropriate timely support that is provided through this Project and through the network of local support agencies.

2. BUSINESS SUPPORT

- Provide direct assistance to flood impacted businesses as they work towards recovery. This would include, but would not be limited to:
 - Support a local business Bounce Back campaign
 - Liaise with and support the West End Traders Association business recovery initiatives
 - Ensure ongoing communication with affected businesses through publications and outreach activities

Anticipated Outcomes – Business Support

- Local businesses are linked to appropriate, timely support and local Traders Activities to assist the recovery process are supported.



3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Work with community members, community agencies to develop community responses that build community resilience, sustainability and connectivity. This may include but is not limited to:
 - Work with local residents to identify preferred community building activities
 - Explore the development of neighbourhood buddy system, “locals supporting locals”
- Support the development of a local disaster management strategy
- Support a local storytelling project around the flood event to validate both loss and community strength
- Development of activities and events to local build ties between residents
- Support the work of the local Flood Recovery Committee
- Network with other local Flood Recovery initiatives across Brisbane to learn from their experiences, offer West End’s learnings and explore models of community building.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Better resourced, prepared, resilient community in apartments, businesses, detached housing.

Essentials of community infrastructure in recovery and reconstruction



1. Greater recognition in the Reconstruction process that community infrastructure is critical to community responsiveness; risk assessment to identify at-risk areas
2. Increased investment in supporting secure and long term 'community infrastructure' development and consolidation - as a fundamental layer in all communities
3. Systematic development of community infrastructure in all communities e.g. neighbourhood centres, community grants, community development workers
4. Disaster management plans for all at-risk communities

Funding needs in the hard infrastructure discussions

- Refer to Silver Lining Report
- Short term
 - ▣ Funding for liaison / Community Development personnel on the ground
 - ▣ Contribution to in-kind support of these personnel by existing community centres
- Longer term
 - ▣ Funding to ensure community infrastructure is embedded into vulnerable and at-risk communities

A useful current Reference



- Under One Roof (2011) Silver Lining Report: Community Development, Crisis and Belonging – Exploring the role of Community Development in Qld's

- No man is an island...
any man's death
diminishes me, because
I am involved in
mankind
-- John Donne



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