



Office of the Chief Executive Officer
Level 2, 15 Green Square Close
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

GPO Box 2765
Brisbane QLD 4001

18 October 2016

Agriculture and Environment Committee

By email: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Madam/Sir

Submission on the Flood resilience of river catchments report

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) *Flood resilience on river catchments Report 16: 2015-16* (Report).

As you will be aware, Queensland Urban Utilities (QUU) is a statutory authority responsible for the provision of water and wastewater (sewerage and trade waste) services to 1.4 million customers in our *geographic area*, being the local government areas of Brisbane, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim and Somerset. The need to protect and improve South-East Queensland's waterways is particularly important to QUU recognising that improved catchment management supports the provision of safe and reliable drinking water for the region.

The January 2011 flood event in South East Queensland caused significant damage to key QUU infrastructure and interrupted customer services. The total damage bill exceeded \$163 million, with cost recovery of \$56 million. Sewage treatment plants at Oxley Creek, Bundamba, Fairfield, Esk and Karana Downs were rendered inoperable due to inundation of mechanical and electrical equipment. For example over 270,000 customers were impacted as a result of Oxley Creek Sewage Treatment Plant not being fully operational for three months. Restoring customer services following the impact to water and sewage infrastructure was a costly and a complex exercise due to the extent of flood damaged.

Following the 2011 event, QUU completed two flood resilience studies in 2011 to develop flood risk mitigation actions being the *Lockyer Valley Water Supply Contingency Plan* (January 2011); and *QUU Flood Resilience Study* (May 2011). As a result of these studies QUU implemented a flood resilience program by rising or otherwise flood-proofing selected assets at the Oxley Creek, Bundamba, Fairfield, Esk and Karana Downs Sewage Treatment Plants to a flood level equivalent to the January 2011 flood height plus 300mm. The scope of the program also entailed flood-proofing the twenty most critical sewage pump stations within Brisbane and Ipswich local government areas. These works were focused on reducing the cost and time to recover critical infrastructure, and minimising environmental and community impacts, costly approximately \$24 million collectively.

The recommendations outlined in the QAO Report are therefore supported by QUU; particularly the need for a coordinated and integrated approach across catchment areas.

A coordinated and integrated approach lead by the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning would complement the work currently being undertaken by disaster management groups, local and state governments, community based land management groups, infrastructure owners/operations and various industries. An integrated approach to catchment management is essential to ensure the best



outcomes are achieved for the region as a whole, however, QUU suggests this approach needs to extend beyond the four catchment areas outlined in the report, to include:

- planning to the entire river basin including Moreton Bay;
- the entire water cycle which incorporates a drought-to-flood continuum;
- community resilience through improving the community's understanding of their flood risks and preparedness actions.

The role of critical infrastructure owners / operators like QUU should be considered during studies and as part of the holistic approach to improving catchment resilience. As highlighted previously natural disasters present significant challenges to the operating environment of critical infrastructure providers. Proactive catchment management can help prevent and/or minimise adverse impacts to water and wastewater services.

Working with our Shareholder Council disaster management groups, QUU continues to improve its understanding of flood risk and potential impacts to QUU service delivery. Through active participation in internal and external joint emergency management training and exercises, QUU has been able to further build emergency management capability to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster. Supply chain risks are also being further analysed to help improve the management of service disruptions across the region. This is being achieved through strong working relationships with relevant disaster management agencies, Seqwater (the bulk water provider); and other critical infrastructure providers across the region.

QUU also partners with a number of community-based organisations to help rehabilitate creeks and rivers to improve the long-term health of urban waterways. QUU has partnered with Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee to rehabilitate more than 30 sites, planting more than 5,500 native trees and shrubs to help stabilise creek banks and reduce sediment run off. QUU has also revegetated a severely eroded riverbank at Beaudesert with 8000 plants, preventing five tonnes of nitrogen and 11,000 tonnes of soil from entering the Logan River. These projects further highlight QUU's commitment to flood resilience and to enriching the quality of life within the region.

If you have any further enquiries, please contact Abel Immaraj, Manager Servicing Strategy on 3855 6215.

Yours sincerely



PAUL BELZ
Executive Leader Planning
Queensland Urban Utilities