

Question on Notice

No. 106

Asked on 14 February 2008

MR PEARCE asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (MR WELFORD) —

QUESTION:

As he would be aware of the recent floods in many parts of the State —
What role did our schools and training facilities play during the serious flooding to help the victims of the flooding in regional Queensland?

ANSWER:

Wild weather conditions impacted on schools and training facilities throughout Queensland during February. Heavy rainfall and flooding disrupted classrooms as far west as Cunnamulla and along the central coast to towns in the Burdekin area.

School, TAFE and regional education and training staff should be proud of the planning, foresight and sense of urgency they have shown in managing ongoing flooding issues. They have shown an exemplary dedication to service to ensure the safety of children, young people, parents and the general community under difficult circumstances.

On a daily basis, regional education staff and principals monitored flood conditions to ensure that students and staff could safely access schools. In many instances, school finishing times were rescheduled to ensure students and staff could safely return to their homes by bus. Education and training staff worked with local disaster management committees to ensure that schools and training facilities were available for the community to use as evacuation sites.

The start of the 2008 school year was also delayed in Emerald by one week due to local flooding and the high level of the Nogoa River. Emerald State School and the Emerald campus of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC) were used as evacuation sites while the school ovals of Denison State School and Emerald State High School and AACC property were used as landing points for helicopters as part of the town's disaster management operations.

The AACC provided extensive support to Emerald residents and emergency workers with accommodation and meals provided for over a week with occupancy levels peaking at 170, including 50 emergency workers. The campus also became the first base for a food drop operation for stranded cattle with campus facilities being used to store and load fodder onto helicopters. In addition, AACC donated over 200 bales of hay for local residents and provided accommodation to AgForce staff involved in the exercise.

In the Wide Bay Burnett Region, Brooweena State School, located 47 kilometres west of Maryborough, was the site for a sleepover for the principal and seven students after flood waters meant some students could not return home. Community volunteers supplied the children and staff with blankets, pillows and food, including a sausage sizzle.

On 15 February 2008, all schools in Mackay and its surrounds were closed following the city's worst monsoonal downpour in 90 years. Mackay North State High School and Glenella State School were used as evacuation centres for the community.

The Central Queensland regional training office contacted major stakeholders to ascertain the impact of the Mackay flooding on employers, apprentices and trainees and arranged for the apprenticeship centre, 'Busy at Work', to operate from the regional office while repairs were made to their flood damaged facility.