Flood Prone Australia Needs More Levees

The performance of levees during the extensive flooding in Queensland and northern New South Wales has again demonstrated that investment in flood mitigation makes sound economic sense.

Floodplain Management Australia (FMA) President Ian Dinham said there are numerous examples over the last ten years of investment in flood levees paying for themselves many times over. In 2007 the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme protected the Maitland CBD, in 2016 the Launceston Levee saved much of the city from inundation, and the Lismore flood levee kept the city safe from floods in 2008, 2009 and 2016.

“There have been some suggestions that the Lismore levee failed during the recent flooding but these are quite unfounded” Mr Dinham said. “The levee was built to the height of a 1 in 10 year flood. This event was larger than a 1 in 10 year flood so the levee overtopped as it was planned to do. The CBD was flooded, but the flooding occurred in a controlled and predictable manner, maximising the time available for people to prepare and evacuate.

“There was a report of a crack in the levee but I understand that was simply a construction joint in the concrete section where a small amount of water was seen. The Lismore levee has protected the city from several floods since it was completed in 2005 but it will occasionally overtop when a larger flood, such as this one, occurs.

Mr Dinham said more investment in flood levees, and more funding for flood studies and planning, will save lives, reduce community hardship and misery, and lower property damage.

“Rockhampton, which has been a focus of attention over the past week, is a city which would benefit immensely from building a permanent flood levee” Mr Dinham said.

“Data from towns like St George in Queensland, which has recently constructed a flood levee, shows that when the flood risk is reduced, the community also benefits from reduced insurance premiums” Mr Dinham said.

In recent years the cost of natural disasters has sky rocketed. Mr Dinham said that modelling by Deloitte's for the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities showed that the financial and social costs in 2015 alone were more than $9 billion and these costs are expected to double by 2030.

Floodplain Management Australia brings together experts from across Australia and overseas to help build a more flood resilient nation. Members include over 120 councils, catchment management authorities, businesses, and professionals involved in urban and rural flood risk management.
About

For more information on Floodplain Management Australia, visit floods.org.au.

(ENDS)

Contact Details

For all media enquiries please contact FMA President Ian Dinham 0467 492 117 or Ian.Dinham@mpsc.nsw.gov.au.