

# Supporting post-disaster planning in flood-affected communities

Kirsty Kelly, Planning Institute of Australia, provides the background to the online, on-demand information system for planners.

**In Australia, floods cause an average \$377 million in damage each year. Rebuilding flood-affected communities in ways that enhance their resilience to future flood events is important to strengthen individuals, businesses and institutions and minimise the adverse effects of future disasters.**

This project, administered by the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) under the National Emergency Management Project program, provided online, on-demand access to information for local planners, particularly in rural and regional areas, that relate to flood affects and planning. Key components of the project were to develop and deliver web-based information and resources, seminars, video presentations from mentors, and easy access to other associated information. The program delivered four key elements:

- the online reference resource
- a professional development seminar program
- a networking and mentoring program
- outreach services.

The PIA content was developed and is hosted on the EMA Knowledge Hub website. It is a valuable resource for planners looking for the latest concepts and tools to build community resilience to natural disaster events through mitigating the hazards of flooding. Content includes presentations by leading industry professionals who deal with building and planning in the fields of flood plain management.

The online resource base is on the PIA website<sup>1</sup> and links to a range of key national and international post-disaster planning resources.

The professional development and networking component included five seminars on post-disaster planning in metropolitan and regional areas. The locations were South East Queensland (Gatton), North Queensland (Rockhampton), Central Queensland (Roma), Northern New South Wales (Dubbo) and Victoria (Mt Macedon). The seminars were specifically developed to provide up-to-date information and resources to regional planners in the identified and

surrounding areas. Speakers who had experience in recent flooding events were drawn from businesses and agencies. They provided insight to the impacts on local and regional communities.

The mentoring service was developed as a series of video presentations by volunteer expert planners answering a range of pre-determined questions and providing up-to-date advice. This was an alternative approach to the traditional 'individual to individual' mentoring model. Mentors were identified based on skills, relevance, and recognition within their fields of expertise and experience in post-disaster planning. While this does not allow for a question-and-answer capacity, visitors to the site have access to a large number of experts who may offer alternative opinions. The mentor presentations<sup>2</sup> are also hosted on the EMA Knowledge Hub website. This co-siting allows access to both the content-based presentations and professional development interviews all from one location. The material on the website was provided in CD format to over 500 stakeholders including local governments and regional agencies as on-site training materials.

Finally, a volunteer outreach service was established by planners with experience in post-disaster planning. The outreach service extends the reach of the regional seminars and increases the accessibility of the information. The PIA reproduced the seminar content into online learning and knowledge-sharing packages to extend the face-to-face delivery of the seminars. The material, including audio and visual presentations, is available online and accessed regionally, nationally and internationally.

The 'Enhancing Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment: Roadmap' is a key implementation of the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*. This PIA project was a pilot implementation project that linked to the roadmap. It assisted in both filling a direct need post-flood, but also in road testing the tools and techniques for future program delivery.

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1 PIA Online Post-Flood Disaster Seminar Series. At: [www.aemi.edu.au/pia/default.html](http://www.aemi.edu.au/pia/default.html).

2 Mentoring and Outreach Seminar CD and final report available at: [www.aemi.edu.au/pia/default.html](http://www.aemi.edu.au/pia/default.html).