Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP) Sub-Plan

Public Information and Warnings Sub Plan

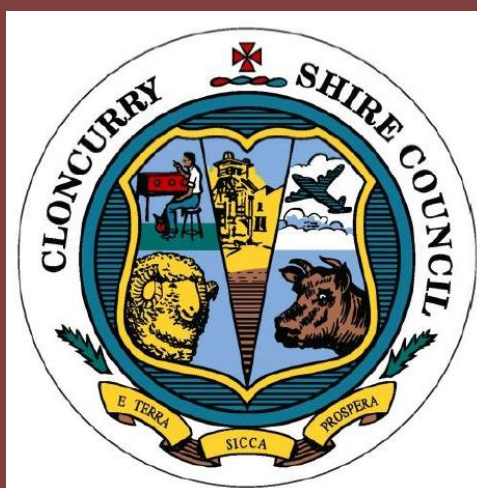### V1 October 2021

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VERSION CONTROL & RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

The following Sub Plan updates have been issued and recorded:

Date	Version	Outline of Revisions	Made by	Approved
October 5 2021	V1	New LDMP Sub Plan	Resilient Projects	LDMG

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF PLAN

1.1   CONTEXT

In an emergency, the provision of public information and warnings plays a significant role in helping people and communities to stay safe**.**

Public information in a disaster context is official information provided to the community to assist them in understanding a particular situation and what they should do to prepare for, respond to, or recover from a disaster event.

Warnings advise the community of a specific threat and the specific actions the community should take. Warnings may be provided by external agencies, the Cloncurry Shire Council (CSC) or the CSC Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG).

Effectively delivering public information and warnings lowers the potential for panic, fear and confusion in the community resulting from rumours and hearsay. A community armed with effective and accurate information can make informed and sensible decisions.

1.2   AIM OF THE PLAN

The aim of the Public Information and Warnings Sub Plan is to provide for the effective collection, monitoring, management and dissemination of accurate, useful and timely information and warnings to the public before, during and after disaster events. The objectives are to:

- Educate and inform relevant stakeholders and community members of disaster management information, warning methods and products
- Inform the relevant stakeholders and community members of an impending or current hazard
- Promote appropriate prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions.

The process of disseminating information and warnings is a standard responsibility of the LDMG and does not depend on the activation of the group. This requirement is fulfilled via broadcast media and the public facing Disaster Dashboard until the LDMG is fully activated.

1.3   PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Providing timely and accurate information about an imminent hazard gives people the opportunity to prepare by taking action to reduce the level of risk for themselves, their property and others. Further, the ability to communicate directly with communities – and therefore keep them informed – increases their resilience.

Broadcast and social media are the primary platforms for public information in most disasters, and warnings may originate from different sources, depending on the disaster.

The intended result of community information is action by the community and warnings are ineffective if they do not have the intended result.

Community awareness and education programs regarding natural and manmade disasters shall be provided to the Cloncurry community by the CSC prior to an event. These programs will be designed to ensure the community understands what is required of them to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters in the region.

1.4   OWNERSHIP

This Sub Plan is owned by the Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) on behalf of the LDMG. All significant amendments must be approved by the LDMG.

The owner will ensure the:

- Master document is retained together with relevant supporting documents
- Level of circulation of the Sub Plan is determined by the LDMG and details of copyholders are recorded
- Sub Plan is updated and reviewed on at least an annual basis, or after activation, whichever is the sooner
- Sub Plan is tested and exercised as determined by the LDMG.

1.5 LINKS WITH OTHER DOCUMENTS

This Sub Plan is interdependent on, and should be read in conjunction with, the Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP). This Sub Plan links directly to all other Sub Plans developed to respond to disasters in the Cloncurry Region, including the LDMG Emergency Contact Lists.

This plan is consistent with the AIDR Public Information and Warnings Handbook.

SECTION 2: ACTIVATION & NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

2.1 ACTIVATION OF THE PLAN

This Sub Plan will be activated by the LDC of the LDMG whenever the LDMP is invoked. This decision should be made jointly with the LDMG Chairperson wherever possible.
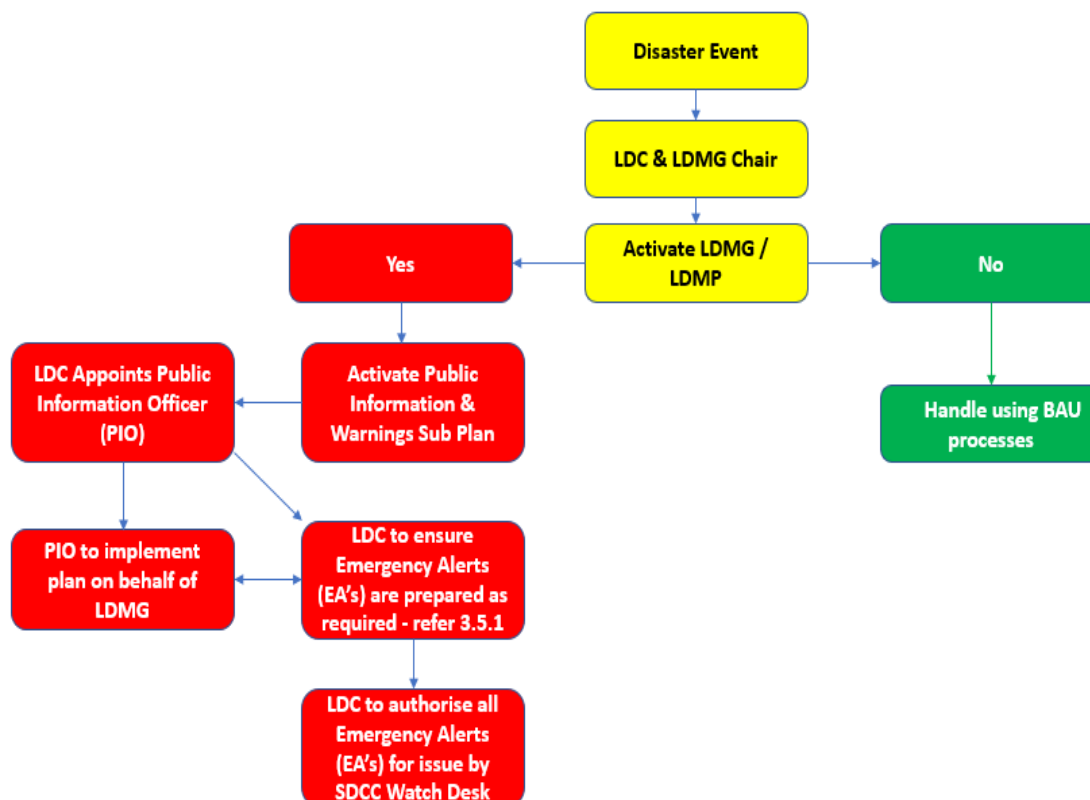
2.2 NOTIFICATION FLOWCHART

Figure 1: Public Information and Warnings Notification Flowchart

2.3 NOTIFICATION PROCESS

The LDC will activate the Public Information & Warnings Sub Plan whenever the LDMP is invoked.

When the Sub Plan is activated, a Public Information Officer (PIO) will be appointed – refer section 3.1.

The PIO will implement the Sub Plan on behalf of the LDMG. If a decision is made to not invoke the plan, then public information and warnings will continue to be disseminated using standard agency procedures.

SECTION 3: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

3.1 LDMG PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)

The LDMG Public Information Officer (PIO) during disaster operations is the Cloncurry Shire Council Media & Public Relations Officer. This role is critical to effective operations and needs adequately trained deputies to ensure 24/7 availability. When this officer is unavailable, the LDC of the LDMG will nominate an appropriate person to gather and distribute public information.

The PIO may perform their duties remotely, but it is preferable that they are in the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) if it is activated so they can provide direct support to the LDC and LDMG Chairperson.

The PIO is the contact for all media enquiries and public information in relation to any event that results in the activation of the disaster management system within the Cloncurry Shire. The PIO is responsible for:

- Obtaining information on the current and projected situation from LDMG
- Preparing and distributing media releases
- Responding to enquiries and requests from the media
- Maintaining a working log of media releases and contacts with the media
- Coordinating and managing media interviews and briefings
- Maintaining liaison with members of the LDMG to ensure the accuracy of information and warnings released to the public
- Assisting with the development and distribution of Emergency Alerts and other official warnings
- Maintaining a current contact register of media contacts
- Maintaining a suite of media information and templates for a range of media platforms
- Ensuring media releases are approved by the Chairperson and the LDC of the LDMG
- Ensuring adequate documentation and record keeping is maintained.

Refer PIO Checklist at Appendix A.

3.2 LDMG CHAIRPERSON

The LDMG Chairperson is the 'face of the media' during disasters. The LDMG Chairperson may defer to the Deputy Chairperson, LDC, CSC CEO or CSC Councillors. All media interactions will be coordinated through the Public Information Officer to ensure consistent and accurate messaging. Uniformed personnel may be requested to deliver joint media briefings with the LDMG Chairperson to ensure agency authority.

3.3 MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Consistent information from all levels of Queensland's disaster management arrangements is critical during a disaster event. The Cloncurry Council LDMG's media strategy is based on an all-hazards approach that identifies preferred spokespersons and key messages to inform the community including:

- Reinforcing the LDMG's role in coordinating support to the affected community
- Reinforcing the DDMG's role in coordinating whole of government support to LDMGs (and the affected community).

The LDMG's media strategy for disaster operations is consistent with the Crisis Communication Network arrangements outlined in the Queensland Government Arrangements for Coordinating Public Information in a Crisis.

3.3.1 Media Templates

A number of media releases have been preformatted to assist with expediting processes in the event of an emergency. Pre-prepared media releases are available in Guardian IMS.

3.3.2 Authorisation of Public Information

A Councillor of CSC, in their capacity as chairperson of the LDMG, will authorise all information disseminated to the public from the LDMG. This should be done in consultation with the LDC of the LDMG, the CEO and the Lead Agency (where relevant).

For urgent matters where the LDMG Chairperson is not available, the LDC of the LDMG (or nominated deputy) will authorise all information for public distribution.

Social media will be developed from the authorised information and not require additional approval. Small and specific points of interest and information, not appropriate for wider broadcast, will also be disseminated via social media, without authorisation and at the discretion of the Public Information Officer. This includes responses to questions posted on social media and conversations on communication apps like Messenger. The PIO will ensure all interactions are recorded and any advice provided takes account of the latest situation.

3.3.3 Media Contacts

A media contact list including after-hours contacts is maintained as part of the LDMG Emergency Contact List.

3.3.4 Media Access to Local Disaster Coordination Centre

Media will not be allowed into the LDCC without the specific approval of the LDC.

3.4 WARNINGS

Warnings are provided to the LDC of the LDMG. Depending on the level of threat, this information may then be forwarded to the LDMG PIO for distribution to:

- LDMG
- Media distribution list
- CSC staff
- CSC website
- CSC social media.

3.4.1 Warning Sources

The agency responsible for issuing official warnings is dependent on the hazard.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) is the information source for meteorological warnings including cyclones, floods and severe storm cells.

Queensland Police Service and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services are the information sources for hazardous materials incidents. In the event of a major spillage or potential contamination, the LDC of the LDMG will be advised and will distribute the information to the members/agencies of the LDMG and to the CSC Customer Services Team.

Queensland Health is the information source for heatwave and public health warnings. CSC is the information source for public health warnings relating to water, wastewater and environmental health.

CSC, Sunwater, and local mines such as Glencore Mining are the information sources for dam failures (depending on the owner of the facility).

Geoscience Australia is the information source for geo-technical hazards. Warnings are not available for earthquakes as they are difficult to predict. A post-event notification may be received that may result in the LDMG issuing local warnings.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (Urban and Rural) and BoM are the information sources for bushfires.

Biosecurity Queensland are the information source for emergency animal or plant disease outbreaks.

3.4.2   Warning Content

Messages must be clear and unambiguous to ensure they result in the desired action. Warnings must:

- Be from an official source
- Be simple, arresting and brief
- Be in non-technical language
- Be suited to the community
- Promote action
- Explain:
  o   The nature of problem
  o   Location/area of the problem
  o   Anticipated lead time
- Probability of the event occurring
- Continuing hazards and safety instructions
- Time of next warning/update.

The PIO will reference the Australian government document Emergency Warnings - Choosing your Words when preparing information and warnings. This is a national reference document on how to construct emergency warning messages for the Australia community.

The PIO will ensure that all warning messaging is linked directly to the original source e.g. the PIO should not copy and paste bushfire warnings, instead they should provide a direct link back to the QFES / RFS real time source which is considered the point of truth for ensuring currency of messaging. This is particularly important given the rapidly changing nature of fire behaviour and impacts.

3.5   EMERGENCY ALERTS

Emergency Alert (EA) is a national system that enables warning messages to be pushed to fixed line telephones and SMS messages to all mobile telephones within a prescribed area. The LDC, DDC, SDC or delegated officer of the referable dam owner (as listed in the approved dam emergency action plan), can request, through their QFES Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) on their respective disaster management group, for an EA campaign to be delivered to potentially affected people. A process map can be found at Appendix B.

EA's are able to be used in conjunction with other public warning mechanisms and methods of providing warnings when information needs to be urgently disseminated.

EA is not an opt-in system and will work across all networks and carriers. It is designed to alert receivers about an emergency situation and direct them to other sources of information, further directions or warnings. A blank EA form can be found at Appendix C. Further detail on the EA system is available in the Queensland Emergency Alert Manual.

Once an EA has been issued, QFES Media publishes a 'web friendly' version of the message along with details about who requested the message and any relevant links to further information. This information is sent to the media via the QFES Newsroom as well as being uploaded to the Queensland Government

Disaster Management website and QFES social media platforms. Refer to the [EA website](#) for further information.

3.5.1 CSC Process for Developing EA's

The LDC will determine if an EA is required based on the situation. The LDC has overall responsibility for developing the warning but may delegate this task to an appropriate Officer (i.e. PIO, Intelligence Officer).

The LDC will liaise with the QFES EMC to ensure that the DDC and the SDCC Watch Desk is aware that an EA will be required.

If a pre-prepared and tested EA is adequate for the situation, the LDC will review the EA lodged with the Watch Desk via the disaster portal to ensure accuracy. If accurate, the LDC will authorise it for issue by the SDCC.

If an EA needs to be slightly modified to meet the needs of the situation, this can be authorised by the LDC.

If a new EA needs to be developed to meet the needs of the situation, the LDC will work with the QFES EMC, Intelligence Officer and PIO to define the polygon and craft the message, ensuring it meets the requirements for the EA system.

If adequate time exists, the new EA will be approved by the LDMG Chairperson. If urgent, the LDC will authorise the message for release.

The LDC is responsible for ensuring all key stakeholders are advised that an EA has been issued (i.e. Chairperson, LDMG members, Call Centre).

Refer to process map at [Appendix B.](#)

3.5.2 Use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS)

When warnings are issued for major emergencies, relevant authorities may use the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) prior to providing information on the situation.

SEWS is a wailing siren sound used throughout Australia for serious emergency events such as severe cyclone, bushfire, flood and storm. Strict criteria exist for the use and authorisation of SEWS.

When the signal is heard on radio, television or over the phone via Emergency Alert messages, it is a cue to the community to pay careful attention to the information that follows and act immediately on the advice given.

Further detail on this system is available in the [Queensland Standard Emergency Warning Signal Manual.](#)

3.6 DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION & WARNINGS

All disaster management groups play an important role in notifying and disseminating information to members of their respective groups and the wider community.

3.6.1 Methods of Release

Broadcast and social media will be supported by other media tools to ensure maximum coverage of the events and to provide community information. Other methods of communication may include:

- Council's customer service number
- [Disaster Dashboard](#)

- Council / community / electronic notice boards
- CSC website and social media
- Council vehicle two-way radio
- Community meetings
- House to house (SES, Police, Neighbourhood Watch or CSC staff)
- Emergency Alert system (SMS and voice message).

Information will be multi-lingual where appropriate.

Information is to be updated at regular intervals to provide the community with confidence in knowing when new information will be released.

3.6.2   Target Recipients

- Members of the community including those with special needs (see 3.6.3)
- Residents
- Visitors/tourists
- Member agencies of the Cloncurry LDMG (list in Guardian)
- Response agencies
- CSC staff

3.6.3   Special Needs Recipients

Those with special needs should receive early advice of an impending serious event (particularly if it affects the specific area where they are located and in the case of evacuation).

Special needs recipients include aged care homes, hospitals, schools, day care centres, visitors, residents on home dialysis and those with a physical or mental disability. A full contact list is maintained in the Cloncurry LDMG Emergency Contact List (refer Guardian IMS). The PIO will need to copy warnings and critical public information to these contacts to ensure warnings and key messages can be relayed to those with identified special needs.
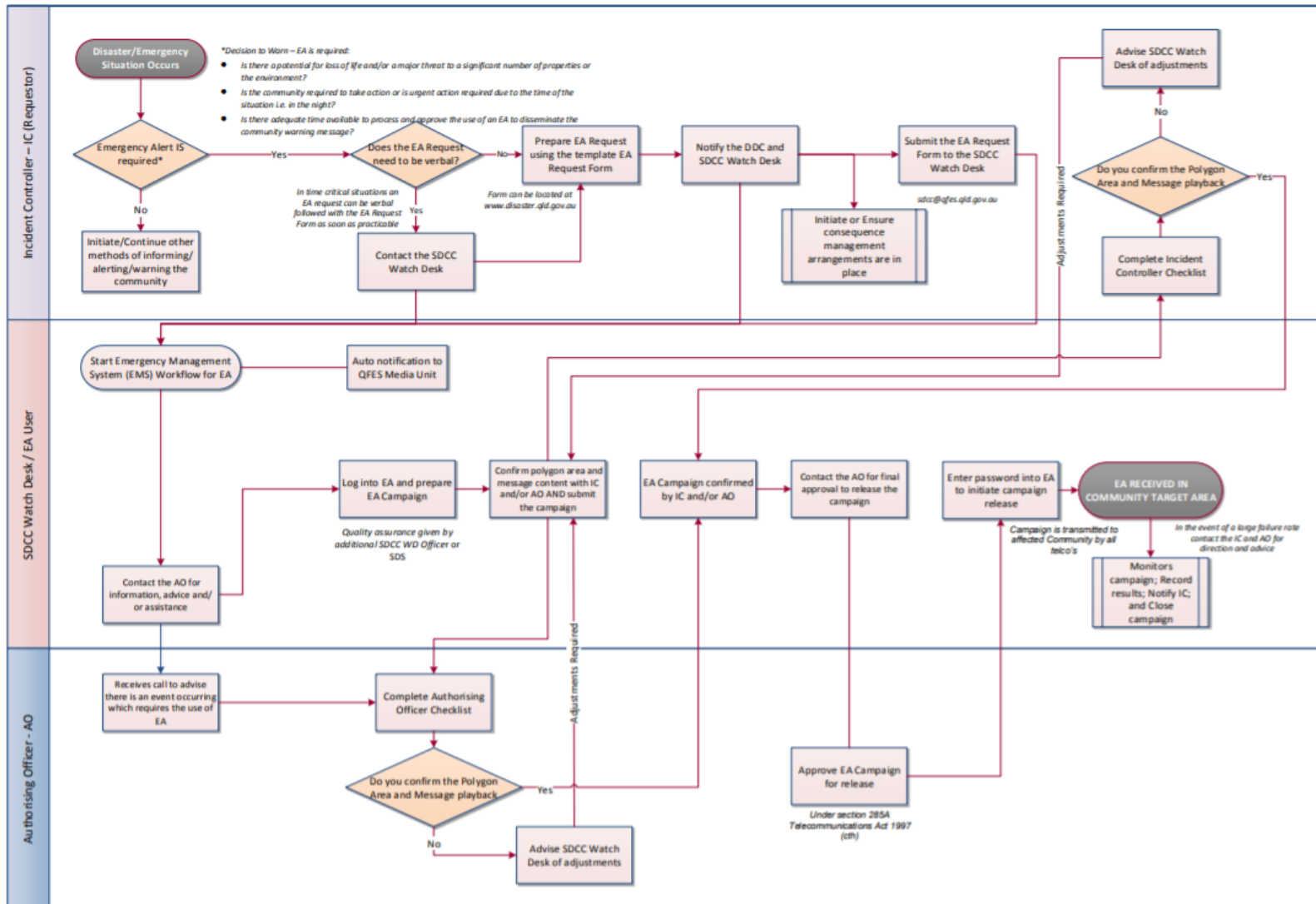
APPENDIX A: PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER OPERATIONAL CHECKLIST

DUTY CARD	PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)	
Reports to:	Local Disaster Coordinator	Tick
RESPONSIBILITIES		
• Maintain watching brief / state of readiness and receive initial information regarding disaster event from Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC)		
• Commence operations log in Guardian IMS. Maintain adequate records of all media releases, contacts and activities.		
• Regularly review Guardian IMS for tasks and to maintain situational awareness.		
• Implement Public Information & Warnings Sub Plan.		
• Establish liaison with local radio and media outlets to confirm key contacts for community alerts and warnings and media release / briefing schedules. Encourage 24-hour transmission where appropriate		
• If LDCC is activated, prepare 'Activation of LDCC' media statement for release and ensure all staff and LDMG agencies are aware of activation		
• Ensure access is available to pre-formatted media releases and warnings.		
• Draft media releases for approval as required.		
• Ensure relevant information and warnings are authorised by the LDMG Chairperson and LDC as required. Distribute as per section 3.6.1 Public Information & Warnings Sub Plan and ensure all releases are uploaded into Guardian bulletins for display in the LDCC and on the public facing Disaster Dashboard.		
• Ensure Director Corporate Services is kept informed of all significant events for public information including website and social media content.		
• Coordinate and manage media interviews and briefings.		
• Monitor news coverage and social media platforms for accuracy, currency and completeness and report discrepancies to the LDC.		
• Check with special needs facilities that they have received warnings as appropriate.		
• Manage personnel assigned to the Public Information Team (briefings, debriefings, welfare requirements).		
• Contribute to Incident Action Plan and Situation Reports (SITREPS) as required.		
• Participate in debriefs as required.		

APPENDIX B: EMERGENCY ALERT PROCESS MAP

APPENDIX C: EMERGENCY ALERT REQUEST FORM

	EMERGENCY ALERT REQUEST		
Queensland Government	Location:		Date: / /
			Time: : hrs
Requesting Officer:			Telephone:
Agency/Position:			Email:

Event Type	☐ Cyclone	☐ Storm Surge	☐ Flash Flood	☐ Flood
	☐ Bushfire	☐ Fire Incident	☐ Smoke or Toxic Plume	☐ Chemical Spill
	☐ Tsunami (NOTE Tsunami EA campaigns will be sent as Location Based Text Message ONLY)			
	☐ Other (please specify):			
Message Severity	☐ Emergency Warning (NOTE activates the SEWS)		☐ Watch & Act	☐ Advice
Campaign Mode	☐ Voice	☐ SMS – Location Based		☐ SMS – Service Address Based
LDMG Advised ☐ YES ☐ NO		DDMG Advised		☐ YES ☐ NO

Threat Direction Required?	☐ YES ☐ NO	Note: Can only be used for Emergency Warnings. Indicate direction on map

STEP 1. EA Polygon Area: ☐ Map attached	STEP 2. Filename:
STEP 3. Spatial format: (Indicate the format used) ☐ KML *.kml (preferred format as per Spatial guidelines) ☐ ESRI *.dbf, *.prj, *.shp, *.shx ☐ GML *.gml, *.xsd ☐ MapInfo TAB *.dat, *.id, *.map, *.tab ☐ MapInfo Mid/Mif *. MIDI Sequence, *.mif ☐ OTHER (insert)	STEP 4. Messaging/spatial data, is it supplied via ☐ DMportal - specify filenames below ☐ FTP - specify filenames below ☐ Email ☐ Other (please specify)

Type (please use capitals for clarity) or handwrite Voice message (Ideally message should be less than 450 characters).

Type or handwrite SMS below (maximum of 160 characters including spaces)

SEND TO sdcc@qfes.qld.gov.au and call 07 36352387 TO CONFIRM		
FOR USE BY SDCC		
Requesting Officer: / /20	Signature	☐ Manual Transmission ☐ EMS Transmission EA Campaign No. _____
EA User Name: / /20	Signature	
Authorising Officer Name: / /20	Signature	EMS Report ID: _____
EA Manual and the Emergency Alert Request Form Template are available at: www.disaster.qld.gov.au		

DO NOT SEND THIS PAGE

GUIDE TO COMPLETE STEPS 1 – 4

STEP 1.	EA Polygon Area (e.g. detailed description and location reference to allow positive identification of message area, including street names with cross street, areas of interest such as parks, rivers, dams, coastal areas) it is preferable to attach a map identifying the message area. If a Threat Direction has been requested, please clearly indicate it on the map.
STEP 2.	Tick applicable box and note the file name.
STEP 3.	Voice Message: type or handwritten the required message. As the message will be translated by a text-to-speech process it is important that words are not unintelligible when translated e.g. "qld" used in a web site address must be entered as "q l d", similarly the word "dot" must be entered into a web address instead of a full stop. Voice Message ideally should have no more than 450 characters including spaces. Do not use special characters – refer to EA Manual for details. Warning message must start with "Emergency Emergency"
STEP 4.	SMS Is restricted to a maximum of 160 characters including spaces and punctuation. Either type the message or handwrite the characters into the boxes.

Example: *SMS Flash Flood Warning from SES for Opal Valley-immediate threat to life/property-Warn others-Leave area/prepare NOW or seek higher ground-Listen to local radio*

If using template EA messages, please provide the appropriate variables that are in the template message guides. Refer to the Queensland Emergency Alert Manual for copies of the template message guides.

//RELEVANTAUTHORITY//

//DIRECTIONANDAREA//

//NAME//

//NUMBER//

//TIME//

//TIMEandDAY//

//DIRECTIONandPLACE//

//HOURSMINUTES//

//PLACE//

//PLACEPLACE//

//EXTERNAL/INTERNAL//

//SUBURBS//

//FireIncident//

//NUMBER//