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Brisbane Floods - a traffic and transport perspective

Flood-besieged Brisbane residents were forced to watch the monster river consume their homes and livelihoods then see the receding water leave behind a putrid, tar-like sludge. The rains formed by multiple low pressure systems over Central Queensland caused chaos over the Christmas and New Year break for many parts of Queensland.

The traditional low lying suburbs flooded first followed by river side homes and businesses. Emergency responses were quick and coordinated.

Interestingly, the concentration of rain was mostly within the Brisbane River catchment. This is still a major river covering a significant portion of South East Queensland. Toowoomba, Lockyer, Esk, Fernvale, Brisbane and Ipswich local government areas fall mostly within this area. The Wivenhoe Dam, a major flood storage, hydro electricity and drinking water storage dam was at 195% capacity.

Water had to be released periodically. This also affected local roads and access.

From a traffic and transport perspective, some interesting events took place. Surrounding cities such as Logan and Redlands supported logistics; shops were open, fuel was available and supplies to flood affected areas were provided. Many businesses were closed. Some are still closed as you read this newsletter. In Ipswich, badly affected areas were only open to the army of volunteers, and not sight seers, of which there were many.

Steps taken by the transit authorities were as follows:

- TransLink services were suspended for only two days at the height of the event.
- TransLink bus services operated by Brisbane Transport (BT) were used to shuttle up to 10,000 volunteers to damage sectors of the region over four half-day shifts on the weekend following the flood peak. BT services were also provided to transport interstate police reinforcements for Operation Safeguard to deter looting.
- Following the event peak, all regular TransLink services, that could be operated, were free of charge for a period of just over one week. This was to encourage commuters to leave their cars at home in order to free up the road system.
- Rail services between Darra, an outlying suburb of Brisbane, and Ipswich were cancelled for just over one week and replaced with shuttle buses on a hub and spoke basis.
- The opening of the Richlands branch line and station, which runs alongside the Centenary Highway from Darra, was brought forward by one week while the Ipswich line, further west of Darra, was closed. With its 850 space park and ride facility, Richlands Station brought significant relief to the transport system in the region.
• CityCat and CityFerry services were suspended for approximately six weeks due to flood debris and navigational hazards in the Brisbane River and the destruction of the following ferry terminals: Uni of Queensland, West End, Regatta, North Quay, QUT Gardens Point, River Plaza, Sydney Street and Dockside.

• CityCat and CityFerry services resumed in mid February on a limited basis, between the upstream Gyatt Park terminal and the downstream Apollo Road terminal. The above terminals remain out of service, with some being completely torn away from their moorings. On Sunday 13 February 2011, a flotilla of 22 CityCats and CityFerries travelled upriver to the new Go Between Bridge to herald the return of services.

Public infrastructure was severely affected for western Brisbane, Ipswich and Lockyer. An estimated $2 billion is needed to reinstate and repair many of the eroded roads. Several river crossings and culverts were washed away and this severed and/or exposed sewerage and water pipes. There was also wide spread electrical damage. Many traffic signal controllers were inundated.

The restoration work continues. It will for a few years to come.

Pictured have been sourced from the Courier Mail via www.news.com.au

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Our Next National Conference

**Title:** Linking Communities Growing liveability and accessibility

**Dates:** 10 – 12 August 2011 (Two day conference then workshops on the 12th)

**Location:** Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre