

Development of a State-Wide Framework for the Regulation of Levees in Queensland

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One of the major findings of the 2011 Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry was that Queensland did not have a consistent policy or regulation in relation to the management or control of levees. The Queensland Government has committed to developing a state-wide framework to regulate the construction or modification of levees by mid-2014. A risk based approach to levee management has been adopted, where the level of assessment will be related to the significance of the risk.

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) is leading the development of this framework. Challenges include: a lack of information on the extent and location of existing levees; details on the future construction of new levees; classification of levees according to significance of impact; lack of easily accessible assessment tools such as flood models; climatic variability; assigning responsibility for the assessment of the impact of levees; managing community expectations; limited availability of resources; as well as balancing the Queensland Government's commitment to reduce the regulatory burden on Queenslanders.

Royal HaskoningDHV was engaged by the Queensland Government to provide input and technical requirements for the guidelines that will assist levee applicants to meet the requirements of a new levee code, and assist assessment managers in their assessment of applications.

The new framework will ensure that when a levee is constructed there is consideration of its impact on third parties, either as a result of its construction or its failure. A number of trade-offs have to be made to ensure that the cost of implementing the regulation or the cost associated with applying to construct a levee is commensurate with the likely impact of that levee.

The paper details how DNRM has been dealing with these challenges in order to implement the framework within the time period available. The use of creative approaches and ongoing consultation with stakeholders will ensure that the framework will meet the commitments of the state government as well as be workable on a local level.

References:

Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Final Report (2012)