



# Local Flood Content Framework

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA



Australian Government



Queensland Government

Get Ready Queensland is assisted through the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements



# Overview

**Flooding causes more damage in Queensland than any other natural hazard. Being prepared for severe weather is part and parcel of living here.**

Social media plays an increasingly critical role in reaching audiences with timely and credible information before, during and after severe weather. Co-designed with specialists in the areas of flooding, disaster management, planning and communications, this guide provides a framework for developing, planning, and delivering locally relevant flood messaging.

Flooding can be a broad and complex topic, which is why this guide provides simple tools and tips to create and share clear and engaging content including planning templates and pre-developed key messaging.

We hope you find this to be a useful resource to help raise flood awareness, preparedness, and resilience in your local community.

To compliment the Flood Local Content Framework, a range of social media templates including flood messaging and imagery are available on the Get Ready Queensland local government hub.

## Local Flood Content Framework

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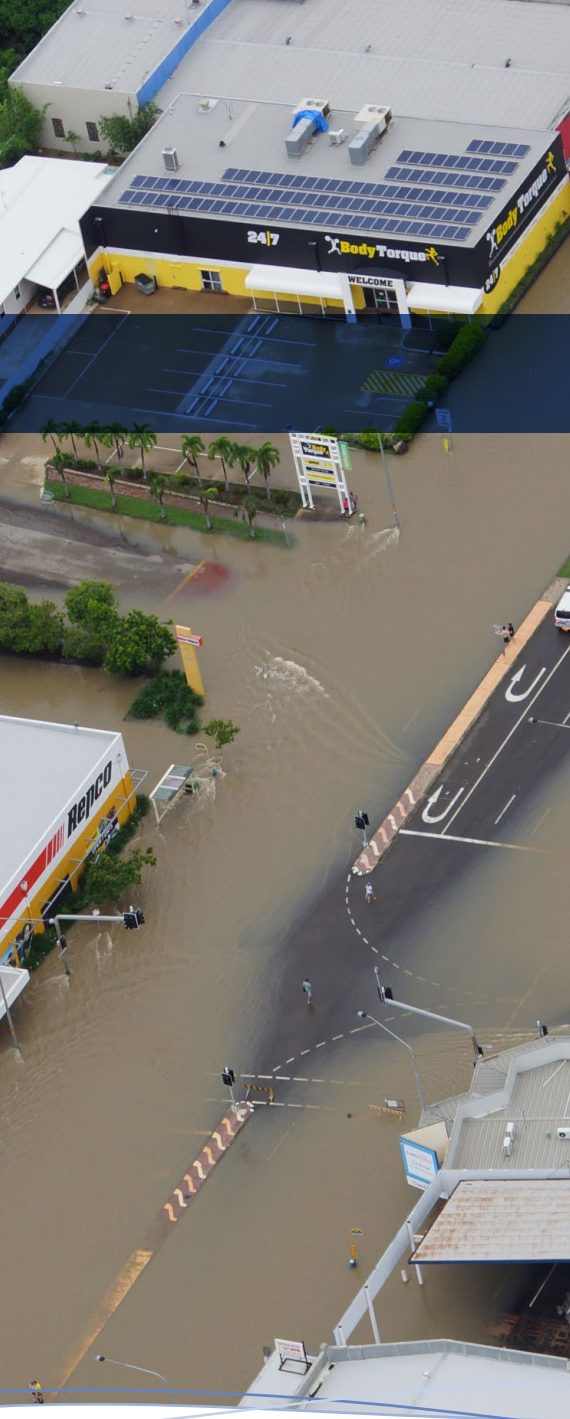


# Why use social media for local flood communications?

**We know why social media is important, but what makes it so important when communicating local messaging about flooding?**

Here are some points to consider:

- Almost eight in 10 people (79%) use social media in Australia.
- Social media provides the potential to reach and engage your community more than ever before, offering an important opportunity for flood awareness content.
- There are three main areas where social media is effective in disaster management: public information, situational awareness, and community empowerment and engagement.
- It is a powerful forum to be transparent and clear with the community about what can be for some, an anxiety provoking topic. By engaging with locals in this way, it can build trust and improve relationships.
- It can be a great way to test flood preparedness messaging with the public and can help in tailoring future messaging and create further engagement online.
- Your local community should rely on you to provide the point of truth about flood related information. We know that message clarity and source credibility make a positive difference to people getting disaster prepared.



# What makes flood content engaging for your local community?

## What does engagement mean when we talk about social media?

Engagement is any form of interaction with your content such as likes, comments, and shares.

It also includes clicking on the words 'see more' to read the full text, clicking on photos to view more images, watching a video, or clicking on a link in the post text. Engagement tells social media algorithms 'this content is interesting; we should show it to more people.' Use these tips to maximise engagement:

### BE RESPONSIVE

- Engaging with people in real-time builds trust and shows you are present. Be prepared to answer questions in a timely manner. Trust comes from knowing what you talk about and having an answer to most questions.
- Have pre-prepared flood responses ready to go to make social media moderation easier.
- Setting up profanity 'filters' is a useful way to manage potentially contentious topics, as they automatically 'hide' comments with key words that could be offensive.
- Consider developing social media guidelines. Social media guidelines are a set of rules for governing what kind of content you publish on your social media accounts. These should be used by anyone across the organisation who's creating content for social media.

### CALL-TO-ACTION

- Engage your audience to prompt a clear call to action at the beginning or end of your posts. Try MESSAGE, ACTION, LINK. For example: "What is your experience with flooding in the local area?" or "Was this your first flood?" Ask them to share their flood preparedness tips in the comments. This can encourage engagement between locals in the comments of your post. Leverage off the information they discuss and provide relevant links if possible. Encourage them to take the next step.

### BUILD ENGAGEMENT

- Draw attention with a statement, question, or headline. People are more likely to respond if you pose a question. For example: "Do you have an emergency plan for your pet?" Tag someone who needs one in the comments below." People tagging others can reach new audiences, start discussions, encourage shares and ultimately, get your post seen by a wider audience. Although this a strong tactic, it's best to do this only occasionally. Using this strategy too often can weaken its value. Don't forget, if you pose a question to your followers, it's important to be there to answer them!



## GET TRENDING

- Pay attention to trends on social media. Try to leverage these ‘trend’ opportunities and use it to capture other topics.
- Always use hashtags. Hashtags are words or phrases combined and preceded by the # symbol. You can use them to identify content, themes, trends, and campaigns. They’re immediately searchable on social media, so they can help your post be more discoverable and pull your posts into trending topics. Hashtags are also a great way to track your social media activity and outcomes.

## CREATE VALUE

- Provide informative and helpful commentary to questions to build trust. The comments section of Facebook is a great area to add extra information to posts. People click to check the comments then see relevant links to further information. Don’t link to PDFs!
- Inspiring content should be especially positive or memorable. It should have an emotional impact and drive a user’s desire to take action or alter their perspective. Examples include people-focused stories, and stories about community involvement in flooding.

## YOUR PEOPLE ARE YOUR TALENT

- You don’t need to look far. Get technical people in your organisation involved to talk about the different aspects of flooding-there are so many. Taking your audience ‘behind the scenes’ can be a simple and engaging way to connecting with audiences. Take sound bites and share. Who are the people in your community that people will listen to? Engaging with them to spread the message is an effective way of getting the message heard and respected.

## LET’S BE CLEAR

- Research shows that an average of 150 characters, or about 15 words, gets the most clicks. Makes sure you use clear and concise text – keep messages simple and limited to four concepts to avoid confusion.
- Use accessible language that reflects the level of a secondary/high school student.

## EDUCATE WITH EVIDENCE

- Make sure you use evidence to support your messages. It’s important to always reflect learning outcomes in the message. Educational content should spark curiosity and help readers gain knowledge. Examples of this format include tips, FAQs, Top 10 lists (use any number), and Did you know? questions.

## EMOJI TIME

- Include relevant emoji to add tone and visual interest ☁️💧🌧️⚡️🌂🌊 Recent data shows that adding emoji can significantly increase audience engagement. Just don’t overdo it! Every emoji should have a purpose. Besides communicating emotion and being relatable, emoji can be utilised as simple engagement tools. For example, you can add emoji to separate blocks of text, making it easier to read and skim.

## MENTIONS

- Mentioning other relevant organisations in posts is fundamental to social networking. For example, you may want to may promote flood information from an emergency service. This can increase mutual exposure and encourage the other organisation to reshare your post or reciprocate with their own. Interactions on these posts (likes, comments, and shares) can quickly increase engagement and even affect algorithms that can help push your content to the top of users’ feeds.







# Building a strategy

**Knowing your locals will improve your chances of sharing flooding content that is engaging and relevant.**

Always ask – **What makes this content valuable?** You need to understand the specific purpose and value of each element of a post.

Here are some other important questions to consider when planning your flood socials:

- What are you trying to achieve with this post?
- What are the local / cultural / language / considerations?
- Who needs to hear this?
- Why should people listen?
- What do we want people to do?
- How can people take action?
- What do we want people to know?
- Why do people need to know this?
- What are the solutions to the problems?
- How frequently do we need to share this message?

Social media content should always support the organisational objectives and overall communication strategy (often includes social media strategy). When planning socials, consider how content is strategically aligned to support those broader objectives.

Knowing how to measure the effectiveness of content will also help you understand what resonates best with your locals. Focus on engagement statistics for each piece of content you share and set clear goals for each channel. This will motivate you to keep producing relevant flood content that boosts your overall objectives.

# Tips for flood imagery and videos

## Social media is largely visual, and visual content provides a critical engagement boost.

Statistically, visual posts get consistently more clicks, shares, and comments than posts with text only.

We know that audiences often engage more strongly with videos. Post video content (like Facebook keep it short between 15-30 seconds) on your feed and use Instagram Stories for more rough and ready moments that are only available to view for a 24-hour period

Try using a mixture of photos, images with text overlay, and videos to enhance the value and visual appeal of your posts. You don't need to add a visual element to every post but pay attention to how images affect local engagement and adjust your strategy accordingly.

Use local visuals such as maps, photos, and diagrams to explain key concepts and information. The overall aim of the image or video is to capture attention and accurately reflect the message you want people to understand.

- Use what you have! Archives (people love old photos), local flood camera footage.
- User generated content – reach out to your audience to send you local content.
- The Get Ready Queensland Local Government Hub has a range of images available.
- Queensland State Archives website is another good source of free images

## Advice about image and video use

### Photo consent and attribution

Be sure to follow your organisation's guidelines on photo/video consent to ensure the appropriate authorisation. Remember to attribute images from where they were sourced.

### Identifiable imagery and videos

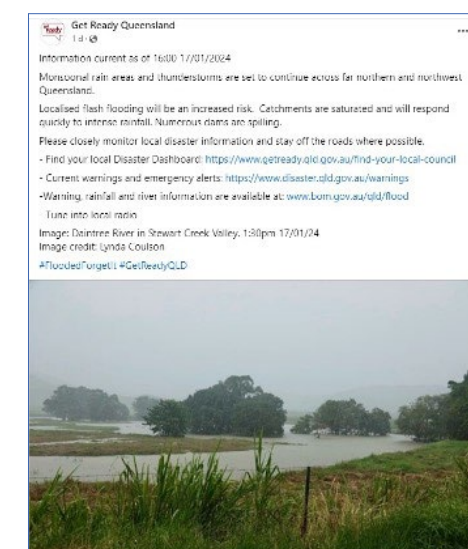
Be mindful when using identifiable locations, especially if they imply the event is happening right now. Use pictures taken the same day or clarify that they are not current. If it's an identifiable road or bridge (people just know!), add a date stamp to the image or video to be clear about when and where the photo was taken so locals don't think it's happening now. Provide location and date information about where and when the image was taken.

### It's all about timing

Consider weather conditions when posting in the lead-up to severe weather. Think about where the weather is happening, and what kind of flooding is likely to happen. Make sure the image is broadly relevant to both, for example, a summer storm will likely not result in riverine flooding. Prioritise images of flash flooding unless a riverine flooding event is imminent. Riverine flooding images are impressive, but these events are rarer.

## Flood post basics

- Information current time at top
- Local Queensland image
- Location stated with time stamp details
- Image credit to GRQ staff member (consent given) at bottom of post

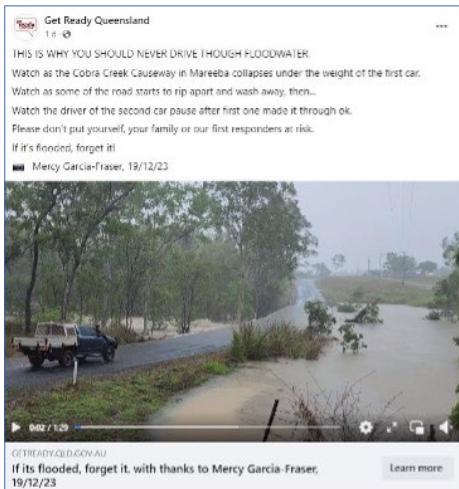




# Examples of effective local flooding content

## Facebook post with video

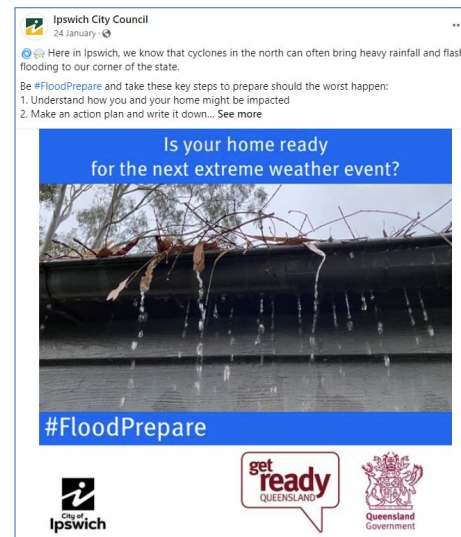
- Inspires interest and engagement -starts conversations in comments.
- Local footage – real people, real places – has more impact.
- Relevant and timely with current floods in FNQ and media coverage.
- Stakeholder organisations such as QFES share post- gains broader reach and shares
- Triggers an emotive response – hard to watch, shock value.
- Powerful visual to drive home key message – “If it’s Flooded, Forget it.”
- The second car inspires action to turn around and NOT drive through flood waters.



\*Always get photo consent and use photo attribution.

## Facebook post

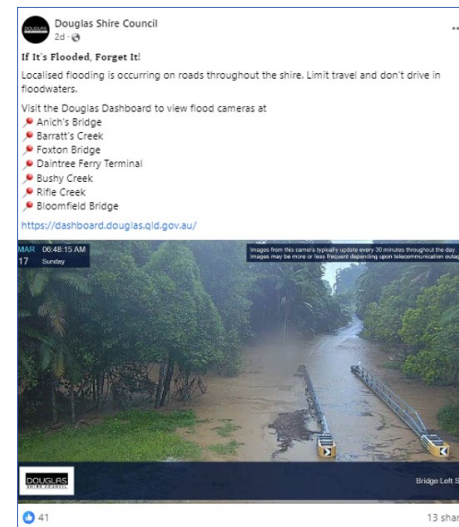
- Asking an engaging question about being home ready for upcoming severe weather – the size of the text can draw attention to post.
- Short and simple post to get flood prepared - provides link that takes you to the council's Emergency Management page.
- Clearly states the key three steps to prepare for rainfall and flooding.
- Uses hashtag #FloodPrepare to increase visibility and share messaging.
- Use of relevant branding to support credibility of information source and organisation's working collaboratively.



\*Always get photo consent and use photo attribution.

## Facebook post

- Encourages locals to visit the council Disaster Dashboard – provides link
- Promotes flood cameras that drivers can check at various locations before they leave home
- Provides information on image about flood camera updates
- Simple messaging – “If it’s Flooded, Forget it.”
- Local photo – real roads, real places – has more impact
- Powerful image from flood camera – can trigger an emotive response
- Relevant and timely with current flooding in region.
- Inspires action to turn around and NOT drive through flood waters.
- Current date and time at top of image.



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## Instagram post

- This cute animal image triggers an emotive response – people love their animals and want the best for them – inspires action to do pet emergency plan.
- This message is relevant and timely information during severe weather season with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper and current flooding in FNQ.
- Asking people to tag in others who have pets (and want to keep them safe) encourages action, broader reach and shares.
- Pet Ready Month in December is a partnership between Get Ready Queensland and RSPCA – collaboration on posts increases exposure of message to a broader audience. Links for the pet emergency plan went to both websites.



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# Content planning – themes and topics to get you started

## You don't have to create all your social content from scratch!

Not all organisations have large social media or marketing teams to produce large amounts of content.

Remember, your organisation and local community are great content resources. Evaluating your own content as well as relevant media from external stakeholders can uncover valuable assets. You can then re-purpose or reshare these assets to help keep your local audience engaged with you.

Consider breaking long pieces of flood content, such as fact sheets, into bite-sized posts. Turn a detailed article into a Top 10 list. Or reuse parts of a how-to article in the form of a Tips and Tricks post. Track the performance of this reused content to help you better understand your locals and fine-tune future content to meet their needs and interests.

The below Local Flood Content Planning Framework can be useful to assist in planning meaningful flood content for your local community. It is about knowing your local community, generating relevant content, creating a local evidence base, and measuring results.

Theme		Topic	
Key message			
<b>Why is this important?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Justification/best practice strategic link</li><li>• Local relevance</li></ul>	<b>Action</b> What we want people to do/ know/ consider?	<b>Audience</b> Who needs to hear this?	<b>Outcome</b> If audience did/ know/endorse, what difference would it make during flood?
<b>Evaluation</b> How will we measure our success?	<b>Existing Resources</b> Do we have existing resources available to help people take action or learn more?	<b>Experts/ influencers</b> Who should be telling this story? Is there an expert who can feature in the post? Will audiences be more receptive to hearing from certain voices?	<b>Content and channel</b> What imagery/ video would best communicate this message? What channel will you post to? Will this message be reinforced across other channels or in person?

Here are some themes with topics that can be applied to your local flood communications. You have told us that some of these themes are relevant in your local community. Use these key messages to help you start planning content.

Theme: Types of Flooding	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Riverine</li> <li>» Flash</li> <li>» Creek</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riverine flooding is where rivers break their banks and water covers the surrounding land. It's mostly caused by heavy rainfall, but can also be caused by king tides, storm surge, snowmelt, and dam releases.</li> <li>Flash flooding can be caused by severe storms with high volumes of rainfall over a short period of time.</li> <li>Creek flooding happens when intense rain falls over a creek catchment. The combination of heavy rainfall, run-off and the existing water in the creek causes creek levels to rise.</li> </ul>
Theme: Contributing factors to floods	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Storm surge</li> <li>» King tide</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A storm surge is a rise above the normal seawater level along a shore caused by a storm. The storm often brings strong onshore winds and typically results from reduced atmospheric pressure. Storm surges often accompany a tropical cyclone.</li> <li>The term 'king tide' is widely used to describe an exceptionally high tide. These tides are a natural and predictable part of the tidal cycle. The time of year they occur varies by location and between years. King tides can increase the impact and extent of riverine flooding.</li> </ul>
Theme: Flood maps and history	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Mapping</li> <li>» History</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most local councils provide flood risk and zoning information online, often in reports or interactive maps. There may even be local flood evacuation route maps. Contact your local council to find out more.</li> <li>Just because there may be no living memory or formal record of your property flooding, it doesn't mean that it hasn't flooded in past centuries or won't flood in coming years.</li> </ul>

Theme: Prepare for flooding	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 3 steps to get ready</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Get Ready in 3 simple steps on the Get Ready Queensland website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Understand your risk</b> Impacts from extreme weather are different for everyone. Learn what can happen where you live and how it could affect how your family lives, works, moves and plays in your community.</li> <li><b>2. Have a plan</b> Make a household emergency plan so your family knows what to do and who to contact in extreme weather. It will give you peace of mind to have important information in one place.</li> <li><b>3. Pack a kit</b> Grab a few extra items next time you are at the supermarket for your emergency kit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Assemble an emergency kit with supplies that can sustain you and your family for at least three days.</li> <li>» Include non-perishable food, water, medications, first aid supplied and important documents.</li> <li>» Don't forget to include supplies for your pets such as food, water and necessary medications.</li> <li>» Ensure your emergency kit is easily accessible and stored in a secure location.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>





Theme: Renting or buying a property	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» New to Queensland</li> <li>» Renting</li> <li>» Buying</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It doesn't matter if you're new to an area or have lived there for years; a homeowner or renting. Preparing for extreme weather is important.</li> <li>It's your job to find out if you live / work in a flood zone. Contact your local council to find out about the flood risk in your area.</li> <li>If you're renting or leasing, ask your property manager (rental agent) if you're in a flood zone and ways to improve your home or business for flooding.</li> </ul>
Theme: Everyday location preparations	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Work</li> <li>» Childcare centres</li> <li>» School</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before storms hit, discuss options with your employer for not attending work, working from home, or having a delayed start or early finish</li> <li>In preparation of wet season, talk with schools and childcare centres about alternative arrangements they can put in place if you are unable to collect children on time</li> </ul>
Theme: Road safety	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Road conditions</li> <li>» Driving</li> <li>» Car safety</li> <li>» Road closures</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Road conditions can change quickly when dangerous weather occurs</li> <li>A car can be swept away in as little as 15cm of water.</li> <li>If you come across a flooded road, stop and turn around. If it's flooded, forget it.</li> <li>Your best plan may be to avoid travel altogether and wait it out.</li> <li>The <i>QLDTraffic</i> website can help you see road closures or make travel decisions.</li> </ul>
Theme: Connect to information	Suggested key messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Disaster dashboard</li> <li>» BOM</li> <li>» Radio</li> <li>» SES</li> <li>» Neighbours</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is important to connect with trusted information sources about severe weather.</li> <li>Find your council's online disaster dashboard for local information during severe weather.</li> <li>Sign up for weather notifications from the Bureau of Meteorology or your local council.</li> <li>Know your ABC radio frequency and add it to your emergency plan to get the best news.</li> <li>Connect to your community, council, and SES pages on social media to learn about local evacuation options.</li> <li>Get to know your neighbours – it is important to help each other before, during and after extreme weather.</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

## **Ready to create and share great flood preparedness content?**

Keep the above key points in mind as you go forward. We want to get your local Queensland community flood ready!

This can be achieved by creating effective flood preparedness content to prioritise local needs and build on what you want your communities to know, do and consider in flood events.

