Harnessing the power of real and virtual social networks during disasters

Amanda Gearing MA (Research)
email gearingap@bigpond.com
Social Media Uses:

1. to give warnings
2. to help find missing people
3. for emergency communications
4. to co-ordinate emergency relief
5. to grieve those who died
Social Media Uses:

1. To give warning
Concerning for the Gatton-Grantham area right now with that very large storm/rain area moving towards it with no doubt, torrential rainfall! Sandy Creek (in Grantham) has caught quite a few people by surprise and I hope they're prepared for it, but sadly I think most won't know until the water starts lapping up at their homes due to our insufficient warning system.

Event is definitely not over - the dry slot is there, but the moist air in front of it is the danger zone which is what's passing through/moving towards Southeast Queensland right now! Not to mention the instability - and radar is certainly showing a clear picture of the instability right now.

AC

Down under chasing www.downunderchase.com

Where does the overflow water go when all of Toowoombas dams are full? Do they flow into the Wivenhoe catchment?

The overflow from cressbrook dam runs into cressbrook creek which runs into the Brisbane river and into wivenhoe.
WeatherZone post at 12.16pm

“sadly I think most won’t know until the water starts lapping up at their homes”
Video posted to Facebook at 12.49pm on January 10, 2011
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.16</td>
<td><strong>Weatherzone post - ‘most won’t know’</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.49pm</td>
<td>Facebook posted video of street flooding and warn it’s heading for Brisbane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15pm</td>
<td>Facebook post – Murphy’s Creek flooded and people are evacuating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm</td>
<td>Facebook post – Landslide at Mount Kynoch – Toowoomba isolated to the north</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.37pm</td>
<td>First 000 call - from women swept off causeway at Murphy’s Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>2 QFRS despatched – could not get through</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.41pm</td>
<td><strong>Weatherzone</strong> – Lockyer Creek – there will be a wall of water coming down it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.42pm</td>
<td><strong>Weatherzone</strong> – flood of frightening proportions . . . Lives at risk . . . Who do we tell?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45pm</td>
<td>Water hit Grantham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social media uses:

2. to help find missing people
Grim monument to lives swept away

GRAHAM LLOYD

HOUSES ripped from their foundations, cars, trees and animals carried for kilometres by the torrent of water that raged through the Lockyer Valley.

The search for dozens of missing people is concentrated along the trail of destruction carved by the water as it cascaded off the Great Dividing Range, demolishing homes in Murphys Creek and headed towards Brisbane.

Police were yesterday scouring a tangle of debris caught in a railway bridge in Grantham, 25km east of Murphys Creek. Parts of houses, trees, wheelie bins, furniture, a cow and up to a dozen cars lie scattered over and around the wooden and steel bridge, each adding to the ledger of human disaster. A rolled-up swag and a football were incongruously perched on top of the bridge surrounded by Eskys, a gas bottle, wheels ripped from cars and what appeared to be an upturned golf buggy.

Take my brother first: heroic final act saves sibling

AMANDA GEARING
NATASHA BITA

A SCHOOLBOY who begged rescuers to save his little brother first is among a dozen people drowned, as police continue combing cars, trees, creeks and houses for trapped bodies.

Jordan Rice, 13, who begged rescuers to save brother Blake, 10

Jordan Rice, 13, was sucked to his death with his 43-year-old mother Donna Rice moments after bystanders waded into raging floodwaters to save them.

His 16-year-old brother, Kyle, yesterday told how Jordan had insisted that the good Samaritans first rescue his 10-year-old brother Blake, as the family’s white Mercedes swept along the torrent that tore through Toowoomba’s main street on Monday.

“He loved his family and he would do anything for them,” Kyle told The Australian.

“He was real shy with everyone else; wouldn’t say a word.

“But courage kicked in, and he would rather his little brother would live.”

One of the rescuers, Warren McErlean, choked back tears as he recounted yesterday how little Blake begged him to save his mother as he was being rescued.

“He was just pleading with me: ‘Please save my mum, just

Continued on Page 4

MORE REPORTS P4
Community Organization
We have a ZERO tolerance towards personal attacks. Stay on topic and be nice or your comment will be removed.
Links for mobile users, page information & terms & conditions

Toowoomba & Darling Downs Flood Photos & Info
+2,831 likes · 49 talking about this

About – Suggest an Edit

Photos
Get Ready!
Bom.Gov.Au Warnings
Road Closures

Highlights

Post
Photo / Video

Write something...

Toowoomba & Darling Downs Flood Photos & Info shared a link.
May 10

Here’s some info, as I’ve been seeing a lot of people still worried about this.

19 Friends
Like Toowoomba & Darling Downs Flood Photos & Info

Recent Posts by Others
Verity Kalucy
Hi just wondering if anyone knows where I can get a list of t...
13 at 7:00pm
Photos of missing people posted on Facebook®
The seconds that separated life and death

INSIDE STORY

AMANDA GEARING
HEDLEY THOMAS

WHEN the water in the living room of Steven and Sandra Matthews's Spring Bluff home reached ankle deep on Monday, they began to discuss how to save their furniture from being waterlogged.

The couple, who were home with their son Sam, 20, and daughter Victoria, 15, were oblivious to the danger that was surging towards them.

As the water level in their house rapidly rose, they realised the only escape was through the ceiling.

By the time they helped their children through the manhole, the water was up to their necks.

Victoria went first, then Sam. By the time he had turned around to help his parents climb into the roof cavity, they were gone, swept to their deaths.

Another daughter, Sarah, who lives across the creek from them, saw the 100m-wide, tsunami-like wave hit the home, ripping a massive hole in its side and carrying a shed and five cars down the valley. She watched horrified, not knowing whether her parents and her siblings had escaped.

Once the water subsided, Sam climbed on to the roof and Sarah saw him signal a V to let her know Victoria was all right.

Steven and Sandra Matthews were swept away by the flash flood in Toowoomba after they pushed their children to safety

He then wrote M and D in the air and waved sadly down the creek, indicating their parents had been swept away.

Neighbours immediately began a search for the couple. They found their bodies before nightfall, several kilometres down the creek.

Family friend Mandy Adams said the couple were wonderful parents and foster parents who had given their lives to helping others through their pastoral work and Teen Challenge.

"As a couple they were childhood sweethearts," Adams said. "The fact they died together is almost poetic. They were really generous people with their time and with caring for people."

Adams said many other families living in the valley were still missing, and she feared many more have died under the onslaught of the flood.

About the time the wave smashed into the Matthews's home, Samantha Warhurst was driving out of the family home at Postmans Ridge, further down the Lockyer Valley.

With her were her two-year-old daughter, Hailey, and mother-in-law, Wendy Warhurst.

It was supposed to be just a short trip to Toowoomba.

Warhurst wanted to buy baby wipes for Hailey at the supermarket as well as gumboots for husband Paul to wade around the muddy grounds of their property.

They had left Wendy's husband, Bruce, to hold the fort in their house in the Lockyer Valley.

When they began the 15-minute drive to Toowoomba, the enormity of Queensland's floods disaster, hundreds of kilometres to the north and west, seemed remote from the Lockyer's rural communities and farms, which are famed for their fruit and vegetables and roadside market

Continued on Page 2
Toowoomba's 'miracle girl' surfaces

Music teacher Hannah Reardon-Smith was feared drowned after dramatic footage of her being swept away

Ms Reardon-Smith, 23, and her mother, Kathryn, were trapped in their car in west Toowoomba on January 10 when the walls of water smashed through the CBD of the range-top city west of Brisbane.

The car was propelled into a power pole. The shocked women were thought to have drowned by those who witnessed the scene.

Ms Reardon-Smith's grip on first-floor railings of the centre's carpark was broken, and she was carried out. Those who thought they saw her being dragged under the water presumed the worst.

What they missed was Steven Iacono, 36, spotting the distressing scene and jumping into the raging waters to save the women.

Ms Reardon-Smith is swept away by the water

Both women were distressed and exhausted, but delighted to have survived. They have since thanked Mr Smith and Mr Gray, who made the initial attempt to reach them. Ms Reardon-Smith, a professional flute player and music teacher, declined to speak publically.
Social media uses:

3. emergency communication
• Fiona : ‘trying to find information about Ken Smith of Twidales Rd, Helidon Spa. If anyone has heard if Ken is ok could you please let me know, my uncle Len from Canada is concerned.

• Reply six hours later: thanks everyone Ken called my parents this morning. Cheers.
Kylie: “Do you know if John and Betty Gosper of Gosper's Rd, Murphy's Creek are ok? I'm very concerned for them!”

Reply next day:
“John and Betty are safe. Their phone line ran across the creek and is gone and unlikely to be reconnected in the short term but they are able to get in and out.”
Number of QPS Facebook ‘Likes’ from May 2010 to January 2011
Social media uses

4. to co-ordinate emergency relief
Social media uses: 5. to grieve those who died
Social Media Uses:

1. to give warnings
2. to help find missing people
3. for emergency communications
4. to co-ordinate emergency relief
5. to grieve those who died
Amanda Gearing
MA (Research)
email gearingap@bigpond.com