DON'T YOU FORGET ABOUT ME! PLANNING FOR ANIMALS IN DISASTERS. THE QUEENSLAND EXPERIENCE

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Animals form an integral part of community life for Australians. The bond between animals and their owners can be that strong that owners may be reluctant to leave their pet behind should they be required to evacuate their property. Recent natural disasters in Queensland have confirmed this to be the case. Unfortunately it is also indicative that animal management has not been adequately addressed in disaster management planning for these types of events which seem to be happening more frequently.

Resultant from the 2010/11 floods in South East Queensland, the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Interim Report made three (3) recommendations with respect to animals during disasters:-

- *Councils, as part of their community education program for disaster preparation, should encourage pet owners to consider what they will do with their pets if they need to evacuate.*
- *Councils should work with the RSPCA to develop plans about transporting and sheltering pets should they need to be evacuated with their owners.*
- *Animal shelters, zoos, stables and similar facilities should develop plans for evacuating or arranging the care of animals in consultation with their local council. Local disaster coordinators should be aware of what plans exist.*

In early 2013 Queensland again experienced flood events as a result of ex Tropical Cyclone Oswald in January and a tropical low in February. Did disaster management plans adequately cater for animals in these events. What lessons were learnt from these most recent events.