

## Floods in the Centenary Suburbs Area: Overview

The focus of this brief account is the known impact of floods in the Centenary Suburbs area, drawing primarily on anecdotal/experiential information. It is not our intention to analyse causes of floods and associated matters: comprehensive reports are available from official sources on such issues.

The Centenary Suburbs area has experienced successive floods since European settlement. Some properties on higher ground overlooking the river escape flooding but low-lying riverside properties are affected by river floods. In addition, extensive flooding results from water backing up along a number of creeks and gullies throughout the area. The flooding of these creeks and gullies accounts for a considerable proportion of the flood damage in the area. These creeks and gullies include:

- Seventeen Mile Creek running into Windermere Estate;
- Jindalee Creek extending back to and across Oldfield Road, and a small tributary behind Mt Ommaney Centre;
- The small creek/gully (known as Scrub Creek in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) that runs from the river in Jindalee through Jindalee Park and beside the Jindalee Primary School, with flood waters at times reaching Curragundi Drive and Arrabri Ave;
- Mt Ommaney Creek, carrying flood waters along Westlake Drive and also flooding the McLeod Golf Course and a gully running toward Jamboree Heights;
- A few smaller gullies west of Mt Ommaney Creek that carry flood waters into low lying parts of the Riverhills area;
- Wolston and Bullockhead Creeks causing flooding in the lower part of the Sumner industrial estate.

Comparative historic flood levels at Jindalee, as recorded in an SEQ Water report, were: 17.90 metres (1893), 14.10 meters (Jan. 1974), <4.0 metres (Feb. 1999) and 12.9 meters (Jan. 2011). There were also two significant floods in Brisbane in 1908 and 1931: the levels of these floods were much higher than that of the 1999 flood but did not attain the level of the 1974 flood. The 1908 flood was classified as ‘major’ while the 1931 flood was at the high end of the ‘moderate’ flood height scale.

In the pre-suburban period, major floods caused extensive damage to farmland, crops suffered and some farmers incurred large economic losses. When the river was the primary means of passage of goods to market, damage to landing stages and debris in the river impeded marketing of products. It was noted in 1870 that the piers at the Seventeen-Mile Rocks were completely submerged (*Queenslander*, 12/3/1870, p.2). After road transport of goods to sales outlets had replaced river transport, the flooding of roads and bridges caused considerable inconvenience for farmers trying to market their products such as milk and butter.

Read more about the local impact of the 1893 floods and other pre-suburban era floods in ‘The 1893 Floods and Pre-Suburban 20<sup>th</sup> Century Floods’  
<http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/floods-18932.pdf>

With closer settlement since the early 1960s, thousands more people have been affected by floods. This includes many more private homes and also a wide range of local businesses, professional services, sports clubs and facilities and also light industry.

### ***January 1974 Flood and January 2011 Flood***

In the January 1974 flood, the Centenary area was only partially developed. As a result, though average flood levels were higher in 1974 than in the 2011 flood, the number of households affected was considerably lower in 1974 than in 2011. Read more about the January 1974 Flood <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/flood-january-19742.pdf>. For an account of the 2011 flood written soon after the event, see <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/january-2011-floods.pdf>



The image at left compares the levels of the 1974 and 2011 floods on a pole in Mt Ommaney Drive.

In the 2011 flood, some parts of the area were without electricity for much longer than others were. Telephone services were not affected and the availability of mobile phones also facilitated communications with people affected by floods. Mt Ommaney Shopping Centre was not flooded and did not lose electricity so a central source of local supplies remained available during and in the immediate aftermath of the flood. Smaller local shops in higher areas of the Centenary suburbs also remained open. However, the flood affected and caused huge setbacks for a wide range of retail, professional services, businesses and sporting facilities as well as small supermarkets and other food suppliers including fast food services and restaurants. Parts of the light industrial areas at Sumner Park and Oldfield Road also sustained flood damage.

For a detailed analysis of weather preceding the January 2011 flooding of the Brisbane River, see -

*Special Climate Statement no. 24* (Bureau of Meteorology website). <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/statements/scs24b.pdf>

Other Government reports are available, providing more in-depth analysis of different aspects of the floods in the Brisbane area: for example –

- March 2011 *Report on the Operation of Somerset and Wivenhoe Dams* on the Department of Environment and Resource Management website.
- [http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/fld\\_history/brisbane\\_history.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/fld_history/brisbane_history.shtml) (contains a history of floods in the Brisbane and Bremer River catchments and a chart comparing heights of successive floods in the Brisbane area since first settlement by Europeans).