

Appendix C – Key lessons from the Feb 2025 rainfall event.

The rainfall associated with the February 2025 weather event totalled almost 3 metres in Paluma. As a consequence the Paluma range road was closed, back road access via Mt Fox to Ingham was closed & the road via Zig Zag to the Harvey range road was closed except for brief windows when river levels dropped below the various bridges. Cloud cover made helicopter access difficult.

In conjunction with the total loss of Ergon power & all Telstra services in Paluma, this isolation presented a number of challenges as follows:

Fuel.

Keeping refrigerators going to preserve food stocks soon consumed the fuel that residents had to run their generators. Siphoning fuel from modern vehicles proved impossible. A few resident's vehicles didn't have enough fuel to drive out via the longer Harvey Range route when opened.

Some locals with large FWDs managed to bring in quantities of fuel in jerry cans on the occasions bridges were above water levels. The TCC sent in 1000 ltr of fuel in this manner, but their staff were trapped between rising rivers on the way out. There was uncertainty about helicopters bringing in fuel.

Approximately 1750L of unleaded & 260L of diesel were brought in on top of what residents started with.

Running small (2kW) modern inverter generators in conjunction with a portable power station (battery & inverter) such as a Bluetti or equivalent would be the most fuel-efficient way to maintain personal refrigeration.

Persuading residents to keep their food in some centralised refrigeration would save considerably on the demand for fuel.

Food.

Only a few of residents appeared to run low on food. Some may have been embarrassed to admit publicly their situation. ***Suggest residents are invited to come to a member of the local management group to discuss their needs, rather than publicly at a meeting.***

Had the isolation dragged on to a point where food shortages became an issue, the local Cafe's & the Hidden Valley Cabins had supplies.

Medical.

By the end of a week many residents were running short on prescription drugs. The TCC LDMC arranged for scripts to be taken or sent to the Cate's Chemist in Hyde Park. Prescriptions were collected from the chemist by the TCC & sent out via road when possible or, on one occasion, by helicopter landing at the Hidden Valley Cricket Ground.

The chemist required the original doctor's script, the chemist printout from the last prescription issue & an indication when the requesting individuals supply would run out.

If residents can be encouraged to keep a month ahead with their prescriptions, this wouldn't be a problem.

Medical consultations were not needed. *However, in such a situation Telehealth Australia might help. Check online for instructions.*

Waste Disposal Paluma.

Road conditions meant trucks could not collect Paluma rubbish.

The bulk of rubbish is packaging & there are plenty of spare bins in the village that clean packaging can be dumped in. Vegetable waste can probably be disposed of in the surrounding vegetation without causing any problem in the short term. Meat scraps are best kept in the freezer until waste collection resumes.

Water Treatment Paluma.

There were some problems with the Paluma water treatment plant due initially to a faulty back up generator. This was corrected when the necessary part was acquired. Limited fuel supplies then determined how long the generator could run. The *Townsville Water* staff in Paluma have plans to minimise this problem in future.

Mail Deliveries.

There was no delivery of mail until road access was restored.