



DISASTER DOCTRINE

**RESTORING QUALITY OF LIFE.
PREVENTING COLLAPSE.
BRINGING HOPE.**

THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR THE TOWNSVILLE COMMUNITY

Figure 1 - Townsville Fighting Fund: A new way of approaching disaster management



THE CRITICAL ERROR IN DISASTER RELIEF

The critical error that has been made for the last 100 - 200 years of disaster relief is that we have approached the "Relief Effort" supposedly focused on the need of individuals and we throw cash at the individual (wrapped in layers and layers of qualifications and forms). This comes at a time when people are in SHOCK and don't have the mental facilities to cope with the situation they are in.

In the simple MILITARY doctrine approach (like we used to use when we went on relief efforts), the problem becomes much simpler (but no less human).

Focus on the needs in order of priority:

1. Health (medical/sleep)
2. Safety – remove all threats of violence (no weapons etc)
3. Shelter (and this is where we should stop for the purposes here).

The approach used in a military unit/peacekeeping:

1. Establish a safe zone - basic human needs first security, food, water, medical and health
2. We provide shelter;
3. Provide them with a safe place to INTERACT;
4. People to TALK to – share experiences, play cards, chess checkers anything we can think of so they can feel CONNECTED.

Not Money, never forms (we leave that to sometimes ill-informed well-meaning NGOS).

It equates to saying "I'm sorry you had a bad experience here's some sorry money". ***This is hardly going to help in a war zone.*** If you gave money to Refugees especially whilst they were still in shock they would stare at it uncomprehendingly. Now just to be difficult, let's make it a different currency, (as some NGOS do) and the refugees don't even know what it is and what they are supposed to do with it. The thought process is: *Am I supposed to buy a KFC Bucket?? Do I buy a new life because mine has just been ruined?*

Now let's make that money REALLY hard to get and throw in a few forms and the refugees would just lie down and cry - just like I did every night for the first 7 days of this crisis.

It's important to note that I have 10 years military experience, I am highly trained and have extensive experience in disaster relief and many other high tempo operational fields. The first 10 years of my working life were in operational squadrons often working with elite units.

My last unit (after I had discharged) was the unit that experienced the Blackhawk disaster. I knew some of the men involved personally and I sat at the pub with dread in my heart as I heard the sound of Blackhawk helicopters landing in a field next to the Townsville City Hospital where I KNEW they should not be landing.

I am no stranger to trauma – and yet during this crisis - EVERY DAY I cried, EVERY DAY was a struggle to function and my home had not even been affected. This was my town, my backyard and these were MY people – and writing this I find myself crying again.

At the height of the crisis at 10pm each night I would type an email to the property owners for whose homes I am responsible – the thought of just having to type each night brought me to tears (and I am trained and experienced in disaster relief).

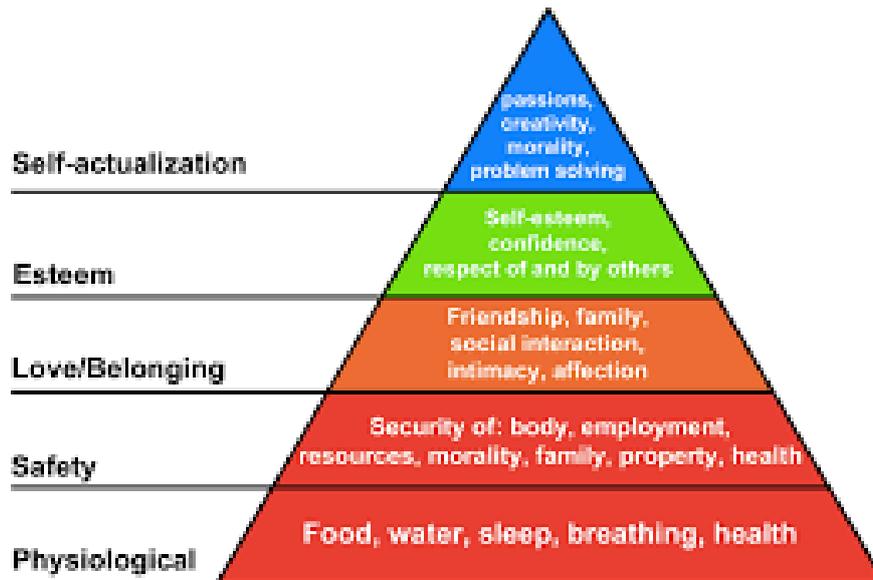
I am happy to talk about this to anyone in power who will listen but giving people forms to fill in when they are traumatised – it's no wonder people "go postal"

So to ask people to fill in a form to access funds is to show absolutely no understanding of the scope and scale of a problem in an event like this – people are traumatised – they CAN NOT think clearly and they need help. Forms are NO help EVER.

THE CURRENT METHODOLOGY IS WORSE THAN A BAND-AID SOLUTION

The current methodology is stupid, and it is just plain WRONG. It's been written by people (like I used to be) who have never been through an event like this and experienced the trauma and horror it brings.

This was NEVER going to happen to me, never going to happen to my community and certainly never to my people. NIMBY at its finest, I was wrong. Just as the doctrine is wrong.



REBUILDING FROM THE BASE UP – A SIMPLE SOLUTION.

Now to a simple solution – just like any pyramid you need to build from the base up or it will collapse, and Townsville is 100% set to collapse.

Speak to ANYONE in Houston – who lived through not one, but two devastating floods, just years apart – and ask them what happened. They will tell you that restoring housing is vital in a time like this.

It's OUR HOME

Our mission: Allow residents to return to their own HOME – it feels safe, familiar it is where the family shared meals and laughs and fights and love and 1,000 experiences every day.

Our focus: Laser focus on reinstating HOMES

The motivation: If we spend MONEY reinstating every home we possibly can - we reinstate LOCAL community FAST. People WANT TO HELP each other – all the local Trades WANT TO HELP and they genuinely care. In most cases they often do it for nothing just because they can....

Ask any Military engineer what the most rewarding thing he has ever done is and 99 to 100 he'll tell you to was when he restored power to a community or established a well or helped put a safe roof over some villager's donga in a far off land with a name he can't quite remember.

We reinstate homes instinctively because we know it is the right thing to do – It doesn't matter who owns the damn thing just get it reinstated fast – 'who cares who pays?' (Military speak for let's get the job done and let the pollies worry about who pays later).

PEOPLE WANT NORMAL. PEOPLE WANT SAFE.

I was fortunate enough to spend 10 years in defence working with helicopters and one of our primary roles was disaster relief, and whilst I can't quite remember the names – what I do remember almost perfectly is the faces. The looks of shock and uncertainty tinged with hope when we arrived and the pride and confidence tinged with just a little regret when we left.

All these communities ever wanted was a bit of hand to get back to normal. One place in particular I will remember forever was Quilpie where after a beer or two too many with the locals it was decided we should have a footy match. The flood waters had only just started to recede, but that was enough for them (they are pretty hardy folk), so Saturday was decided as the date for our "Friendly".

They grow 'em big out there and I can tell you we put on a good show but these country lads gave us slick city flyboys a fair kicking and for them that was symbol that life had returned to normal. We had a few more beers and a day or two more helping out, but we all knew the crisis had passed and it was time for us to leave, only a few of the town turned out to see us off – unlike the 200 or so who had greeted us; these were country folk and they had country things to do, mending fences finding stock and catching up with neighbours to talk about other floods.

But what I learnt on that trip has stayed with me for life, people just want stuff to return to NORMAL – they don't want money (but they will take it) - and they definitely don't want forms and rules.

"The world doesn't make any sense so you can shove your rules right where you can fitterm" I'll always remember one Quilpie farmer barking that at us as he brought his three favourite cattle dogs on board our rescue chopper.

HANDING OUT MONEY JUST DOESN'T WORK.

It's ill thought-out, has a tendency to be ad-hoc and very little of the money gets to where it is really needed.

The current system sees someone who has lost their entire life in 3 hours and issues them a form.

A HORRIBLE, TRAUMATIC event has devastated this person and they are then presented with a form asking evidential questions and issuing a whole lot of judgement about that person's life and everything they owned. Seemingly grudgingly, the OK *might* be given and the person *might* receive \$1,000 to help their recovery efforts.

That's right - The ability to get their lives back to normal is now valued at \$1,000. A sum which may not cover *actually* getting their lives back to normal, given the substantial shortfall in many insurance claim payments.

HERE'S WHERE WE'RE GOING WRONG

What is wrong in the current doctrine is that zero importance is placed on restoring the HOME – don't mistake this for a HOUSE (though in this context they are interchangeable).

- 1. People want NORMAL**
- 2. People want SAFE**
- 3. People want restoration of community, and familiar surroundings (e.g. My bedroom, my TV and lounge room, my kitchen where I prepare meals for my family and, yes, my bed if it can be done. We just want what was, or as close a facsimile as we can get).**

As Property Managers for over 100 flood-affected homes, we've seen this basic human need in action many times over in the last three weeks.

We couldn't understand it but we have a few (maybe 8 or 10 tenants) who have returned to fully flooded properties, pulled out carpets, demoulded, ripped out damaged curtains and spent hours and days trying to save these properties because they are TRAUMATISED and familiar is safe.

They don't even OWN the properties, but they have done this primarily because we all seek the familiar.

LET'S TAKE ACTION. NOW.

I went to the same coffee shop every morning during the flood crisis. It was my safe place: same breakfast, same cup of tea, same teapot, same conversation – the importance of “How'd ya go mate?”

That coffee shop closed this week.

I don't even know if it was planned or a result of the economic impact of the floods, but for me it was just one more symbol of safety and community this event has destroyed. So I cried – I cried for what was, I cried for those poor people we haven't helped yet still living in Third World conditions and, yes, I cried a little for me.

Let's help these people!

We can help them by restoring their HOMES – *their* safe place. Every HOME we save is another family safe, another beacon of hope in our heartbroken community, another symbol of our defiance to NEVER, EVER give in.

After 26 days, we should start doing it NOW

THE AUTHOR

SHAUN PODBURY
TOWNSVILLE RESIDENT OF 30 YEARS

Shaun's passion for Queensland extends past his time spent in Brisbane and Townsville as part of his 10 years with the Australian Defence Force. He has personally been involved in many relief programs during his time in the RAAF and Australian Army with support for flood relief covering Quilpie and Rockhampton as well as the mining disaster at Moura. After leaving the military, Shaun made Townsville his home and has always been drawn to North Queensland.

Shaun was an intrinsic part of the team behind one of Townsville's Leading construction companies, providing him with the skillsets and drive to establish Coral Sea Property Management after being told that it “unreasonable to expect service that was accountable in the property management industry”.

Coral Sea Property Management prides itself on accountability, owner advocacy and transparency which are all qualities demonstrated by Shaun. Shaun has personally taken on the REIQ twice, battling it out for his Property Owners whilst ensuring his tenants are never exploited or manipulated by the industry.

Coral Sea has won the Best PM agency in Australia with LPMA (Leading Prop Managers of Australia) in 2015 and continues to innovate in the industry with unique office management, an online intranet system, and constantly developing systems such as FastTRACK. The FastTRACK system was developed and implemented in four days during the current Townsville flood crisis.

Shaun is a systems, logistics and processes man, a serial entrepreneur and above all, has a deep love for Townsville and the people in it.

All progress depends on the unreasonable man (or woman) and Shaun is, among many things, very definitely an unreasonable man who NEVER accepts the status quo simply 'because that's the way we've always done it'.

Many will ask why is an alternate theory required but unless and until you have lived through one of these events it is impossible understand how terribly inadequate the current system is for the Job required and in the end it's the Community who suffers as the finger-pointers go to work.

This needs action now.

CONTACT US AT

Shaun 0418 188 554
Darren 0418 188 554

FIND US AT

townsvillefightingfund.com.au
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