The volume of total inflow into Wivenhoe Dam during the event was 2,650,000 megalitres, or the equivalent of more than five Sydney Harbours’ worth of water.

Releases based on the forecasts, it would have made the situation worse. This disaster and others like it, experienced in Australia and around the world over the past decade, are signalling a warning for the way in which we manage water in this vast country. Climatic events are becoming more extreme and we need to have infrastructure, technology and skilled people to cope with whatever comes. A new WSAA report, Climate Change, Adaptation and the Australian Urban Water Industry, released last month, supports this view and makes recommendations for urgent federal and state government action across the country.

The report found that although the Federal Government has invested well in programs that identify where underlying infrastructure Australia relies on for its water supply and sewerage may not be able to cope with these sorts of climatic events in the future, particularly in low-lying areas.

The estimated replacement costs of extreme event, exposed water assets is well in excess of $100 billion. The Queensland Government’s final report makes recommendations on improving readiness for crises and response to emergencies that are relevant to all states and territories. WSAA will be examining them closely and urging governments to heed the warning of the 2011 Queensland floods.

Dr Jeff Lottei is state director of the political think tank The Australian Fabians (Queensland).

Live trade shames Australia

Chris DeRose

AUSTRALIA is a proud and beautiful country. The people are warm, progressive, well-educated and known across the globe for their outstanding hospitality. Sadly, the world was shocked when we became aware of the horrific cruelty of Australia’s live export industry was willing to subject animals to, in order to provide them to the Middle East, South-East Asia and North Africa. Images of Australian cattle being eye-gouged, kicked, whipped and tortured created an outpouring of rage across the globe.

We were stunned to learn that despite years of evidence documenting the cruel treatment of Australian animals in the Middle East, the live export industry has retained the unconditional support of successive Australian governments.

Moreover, this support was in direct conflict with the views of the vast majority of Australians, who were appalled by their country’s participation in this trade. Australia’s willingness to sell animals to countries that fail to comply with international animal welfare guidelines has actively undermined the work to encourage animal welfare improvements there.

How can an industry that has been responsible for the suffering and deaths of countless millions of animals maintain government support and be allowed to continue?

Decent people across the world applauded the Gillard Government’s suspension of the trade to Indonesia as well as the tabling of legislation to ban live exports. It was taken for granted that a vote in the Australian Parliament to end the trade would be unanimous.

We were then appalled to learn that both main political parties were refusing to support this legislation, despite overwhelming opposition from the Australian community.

Why was this allowed to be asked? Why do the operators of an industry that brings such shame on Australia and is responsible for such suffering have a stranglehold over Australia’s decision-makers? How can so few counter the opinions of so many?

Present initiatives by the Gillard Government to regulate this trade are all too little, too late and they are not working. Animals Australia recently released footage of the continued brutality even after the new framework to protect animals was put in place.

Despite promises from the Minister for Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, the Gillard Government has not made any progress in preventing Australia’s animals from being tortured. The only way to repair the damage done is for the trade to be banned and, through doing so, to finally send the right message to importing nations: animals and their welfare matter.

To all of you united in opposition to this cruel trade, be heartened by the fact the international animal welfare community and all who are compassionate worldwide are with you. Our message is not to give up!

Chris DeRose is the president and founder of Last Chance for Animals, a US-based international animal rights organisation.