

Marketing the message

Brave new world

By Kathryn White

In early October, an innovative, experimental, high-impact marketing campaign marked the launch of Queensland's storm season to great effect.



Could you survive three days of isolation at home if roads, power and water were cut?

This hypothetical became a reality for Brisbane-based comedian Stuart Fisher and NOVA radio personality Dave David as they bunked down together for three days in a mock living room under torchlight, with no running water, a generator, an emergency kit and basic food rations at Reddacliff Place in the middle of Brisbane's CBD.

The duo entered the mock home at 7:00am on Thursday 6 October and remained inside until the State Emergency Service (SES) came to assist them on Saturday 8 October.

Developed by Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) in conjunction with NRMA Insurance, the Can you survive for three days challenge (the Challenge) also utilised social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter, with David and Stuart sharing their personal experiences in storm readiness.

Department of Community Safety Sponsorship Manager, Leah Hornibrook, said the department wanted more than a media call or press conference to launch storm season.

"The idea was to create something that would resonate with people for longer – a living, breathing event in a high-impact location, coupled with pro-active Facebook

and Twitter messages designed to drive the disaster preparedness message home to all Queenslanders.

"Through this experiment we encouraged Queenslanders from all walks of life to share their experiences of coping without some of the things people take for granted as well as the actions they've taken to make sure they're prepared following this year's events," said Leah.

According to Leah, the use of social media to engage and sustain the public in a disaster preparedness dialogue was a first for Queensland.

"We faced new territory on this campaign," she explained, "setting out to specifically develop a social media audience in a way that communicated our core messages, engaged the public and highlighted our relationships with key community partners like NRMA Insurance, The Salvation Army Emergency Services, RSPCA, Bunnings Warehouse and the Red Cross."

To track what happened in the house and share experiences about how to prepare for the coming storm season, people were encouraged to 'like' the QldSES Facebook page, 'follow' @qldses on Twitter or join the conversation using #survive3.

When the Challenge started at 7:00am on Thursday 6 October, the QldSES Facebook page had 200 followers. A live NOVA broadcast from Reddacliff Place from 6.00am to 9.00am on the first morning helped ramp up online traffic, and by the end of the three-day event there were more than 3,800 Facebook followers.

"It's gone beyond our wildest expectations," said Leah. "Less than two months after the event we hit over 10,000 followers on Facebook and the number continues to climb," she said.

Throughout the three days, SES volunteers were on site to educate the public on household preparedness in conjunction with representatives from the Department's community partners.

"The success of this campaign was ultimately underpinned by the strength of our partnerships. Working with organisations that share the same values, goals, ideals and objectives strengthens the message being communicated and ultimately ensures a broader audience."