



Planning helps when disaster strikes

Australia has suffered a number of natural disasters and health scares recently. Forward planning can minimise impact on individuals and business.

Flood and storm damage in North Queensland, beach erosion on the Gold Coast and Northern New South Wales, bird and swine flu epidemics are among the problems we have recently faced and may well face again.

Natural disasters and health scares impact on individuals, business and organisations in a number of ways. Expert insurance advisor and solicitor Hamish Broadbent of O'Keefe Mahoney Bennett Solicitors says business owner should be aware of how natural disasters and health scares can affect viability.

"Business people should be conscious of the exposure they face and protect their assets," Hamish says. "It is important to understand how events may affect premises, stock, equipment, records and lines of communication. Events impacting on one business property may damage neighbouring properties.

"Business owners and managers must protect staff; these are their most important asset. A flu epidemic would result in mass staff absence. Without staff, most businesses and organisations grind to a halt," he says.

Hamish says the Gold Coast's naturally low-lying geographical area is prone to flooding. "This region is prone to environmental damage from storms and exposure to the ocean. The Asian tsunami had a

devastating effect on people and the local economy. We can't say it won't happen here.

"The Gold Coast relies on tourism and development. These industries in particular need to invest in risk management to ensure adequate procedures, policies, and insurance are in place. This will help minimise exposure and losses caused by natural disasters and health issues," he says.

Hamish says business owners must have plans in place to enable key staff to continue working from home should disaster occur.

"Computer networking, casual labour and other types of corporate risk procedures including documented company knowledge, processes and procedures will ensure temporary staff and staff working from home know what to do," he says.

"I advise all business people to revise business continuity plans and general insurance frequently. Revision should include everything from basic workers compensation protection and public liability to major disaster management plans," Hamish says.

For more information on business insurance and contingency plans contact O'Keefe Mahoney Bennett Solicitors.



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