

## **Note**

This statement has been redacted to remove certain personal information and information that is not relevant to the land planning terms of reference.

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Peita Louise McCULLOCH
<i>Date of Birth</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Address and contact details</i>	[REDACTED] Auchenflower
<i>Occupation</i>	Town Planner
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Sergeant Stephen Platz
<i>Date taken</i>	12/09/2011

**Peita Louise McCULLOCH states:**

1. I am a qualified town planner and currently employed by the Queensland Government with the Urban Land Development Authority (ULDA). At the time of the 2011 floods I had just started my position with the ULDA. Prior to that I was employed by the Brisbane City Council (BCC). I provide this submission, however, in the capacity of a private resident and the issues I have identified in my area.
2. I am the part owner of a 1930s workers cottage (character home) with my fiancé at [REDACTED] Auchenflower. The house is located within a Character Residential Area surrounded by similar homes with respect to age and style. The Brisbane River is located approximately one kilometre to our east. The house belonged to my fiancé's grandmother and I was aware that it had been flooded during the 1974 floods. In 2007 my fiancé undertook some minor internal renovations including restumping. At the time of restumping the original house was raised above what he believed was BCC's Q100 flood level. The habitable floor level of the house was raised to 5.92m AHD at this time. In 2009, when I became part owner, I conducted extensive research with regards to the type and extent of flooding the house was subject to before we committed to renovations. I confirmed that our property was subject to flooding from the Brisbane River only and our Q100 habitable floor flood level was 5.9m AHD. It was my belief following discussions with BCC Engineers that this Q100 level included a 600mm freeboard. We commissioned a qualified surveyor to quantify that the existing

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dwelling had indeed been raised above BCC's Q100 flood level. The survey plans confirmed that the house was raised to 5.92m AHD. In terms of our proposed renovations, there was no need to raise the existing house or extension areas any higher as they would already be above BCC's flood level.

3. In 2009 following a full town planning investigation, we commissioned an architect to prepare extensive renovation plans in accordance with BCC's Small Lot and Character Codes. The architectural plans also ensured compliance with BCC's habitable and non habitable floor levels for flooding from the Brisbane River. This meant that we moved the existing laundry and bathroom that were at ground level up to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor 5.92m AHD to ensure that both were 'legal'. For the purposes of this statement, the laundry and bathroom could have been located at 5.6m AHD as they are considered non habitable rooms; which has a 300mm lower flood level. We decided to act on the side of caution and moved the laundry and bathroom to 5.92m AHD so that there could be no chance of flooding.
4. The house was fully renovated from March 2010 – October 2010. The house is raised on wood and steel poles, which sit on top of a large concrete slab. The area between the concrete slab and the habitable floor remains unenclosed but is battened in accordance with BCC's preferred outcome for character houses. There are no habitable or non habitable rooms within this area. The renovations did include an enclosed internal stairwell that leads down to the ground level from the main dwelling. I received signoff from BCC for this stairwell.



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5. As a town planner my understanding of the Q100 level is that it is a designated level set for urban development that indicates safe building zones with respect to flood risk. This level takes into account the Wivenhoe Dam's flood mitigation ability and an extra 600mm freeboard above the calculated flood height. As we were now fully compliant with this level I was confident that our flood risk was minimal.
6. Just before Christmas 2010 I liaised with engineers from the BCC who told me to expect serious rain fall during the holidays and the possibility of flooding. No one was able to determine the extent of flooding, but the only part of my house that should be at risk was the stairwell. As I am aware of the flood history in my area I decided to err on the side of caution and obtained a quantity of sand bags for my home, for the purposes of sandbagging the stairwell.
7. On Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 I started my new job at the ULDA. Whilst at work I received information that Torwood Street, Auchenflower was starting to flood at the high tide. I am aware that this area often floods during king tides and heavy rain and is not far from my premises. At 2.00pm I left work and went home just to be sure the flooding wasn't significant. Thankfully the flooding at Torwood street went down after high tide and there was no flooding in our street. Later that day my fiancé and I used the sandbags we had already acquired to sandbag the outside of the internal stairwell. We also purchased supplies required to ride out a week of flooding with no power.
8. On Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> day of January 2011 I arrived at work around 8.00am. I was only at work for about 45 minutes when I received reports that there was flooding at Torwood Street. The rain was extremely heavy and my fiancé and I immediately went home and monitored the media reports. As a result the of the information being broadcasted by the authorities and from a friend in the SES concerning flooding my fiancé and I realised that we did not have enough sandbags and we headed back to the SES headquarters to obtain more. Around midday we re-sandbagged the internal stairs, this time using a tarp as a base and placing the sandbags to approximately 1.5m high. We also taped up the doors internally for extra flood protection.

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9. By 1.00pm on Tuesday water had entered our rear street (Vincent Street) and was lapping at our driveway. The water was steadily increasing but despite this I was still confident that the house would be above the flood levels due to our clearance above the Q100 level. It had stopped raining by this time which assisted in our flood preparation. For the purposes of this statement our habitable floor is raised almost 3m above ground level. At this stage in the afternoon there was very little water in our yard.
10. By 2:00pm water had entered our yard. We decided to disconnect all of the power to the house as we have a rainwater tank pump that sits on the slab. We were worried that if this got wet it would blow the fuses.
11. At 3:45pm the flooding was in our yard but had not reached our concrete slab. It was halfway up our driveway. A photograph was taken at 3:45pm and has been submitted as part of this statement. At this time we packed up photos, important belongings and document along with computers and sent them to a family member's house in St Lucia just in case we did have to evacuate later.
12. At 5.00pm the flooding had increased and our neighbours to the rear of our house, who are significantly lower than ours, were evacuated by the Police. We assisted them getting as many belongings as they could. Water in the street was up to the top of our thighs. The neighbours evacuated to Beard Street which is 40m to the south of my home and at this time not inundated. Police took our details and encouraged us to leave, however our main access Haig Road at this time was in no danger of flooding. We advised the Police that we would keep an eye on it and if it looked like Haig Road would go under we would go so we could get our car out. Still not expecting the water to come near our floor boards, but erring on the side of caution, we packed up the majority of our clothes and other items to send to 2 x friend's houses in a neighbouring 'high' streets. The rain had stopped at this point.
13. At 10:40pm we found that water had entered the internal stairwell. It was just covering the tiles as indicated in a submitted photo but we assume much higher outside. It was dark out and no way of determining this but the water had clearly

breached our sandbagging. Not knowing where it was coming from, we bucketed it out for an hour try to find the leak. Eventually we noticed the water bubbling through the pain and coming out of the power points. We gave up on the bucketing and decided to head back to the SES to get more sandbags to try and stop the water rising up the stairwell and into the house. In the hour that we bucketed the water it rose by approximately 40cm and was now up to the 4<sup>th</sup> stair.

14. By the time we arrived back from the SES around 1am the water was almost halfway up the stairwell; 1.5m above ground. We sandbagged to the top of the stairwell hoping to prevent as much damage as possible. We also turned our attention to doors and low windows on our floor level and masking taped all of the gaps to try and stop the water from entering. We took this opportunity to pack up the rest of the portable items we could and move them to our friend's house. We kept up with constant updated via ABC radio. There was still no water in Haig Road, however by the time we got back from the SES there was approximately 0.5m of water in our front yard. For the purposes of this statement our front yard is lower than Haig Road by 4 stairs.
15. Around midnight water started to cross Haig Road near Beard Street but was only 30cm or so.
16. At 2:30am we decided to evacuate to ensure we could get our car out. We had filled our car up again with as many items as we could. There was no rain. The high tide was expected to be around 3am, so we sat in the car on Haig Road on the other side of Beard Street with a Police officer until this time. We waded back in after 3am and the water was still over 1.5m (or so it seemed) off the floor boards. We decided to have a few hours rest, but I by this stage with 1 more day of flooding expected I was not convinced that we would escape. We decided to return at 6am to evacuate the rest of our belongings.
17. We arrived back at our house around 6:30am on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> day of January 2011. We were shocked to see how much the water had risen in 3 hours especially since the tide should have receded to some extent. The water was now less than 1m off the floor boards. I was now convinced that we were not going to

escape being flooded. In the few hours that followed we managed to evacuate as

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much as much of the contents of our home as possible. The only items left were electrical, bed and cabinets that could not be moved. Water at this stage was at least 1m on Haig Road and at shoulder height in our front yard and we had to wade in and out of our property through the flood waters to get our possessions to high ground. We were assisted in this evacuation by very kind neighbours from higher parts of Haig Road, Birdwood Terrace, family and friends. We left the house around 11am with belongings but returned around 2pm to wait and see how high the water rose with the high tide. Around 4pm a neighbour took me in a boat to inspect the flood heights. At this point is the water was approximately 40 – 50cm below the floor boards.

18. We woke early on Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> day of January 2011 to reports that the peak of the floods was not as high as expected; less than 1m. This instilled some hope that the house would have made it. Around 7:00am we managed to obtain a canoe and I paddled in while my fiancé swam with a friend. As I approached the house, the water was under the floor boards as evident in the submitted photo taken at 8:14am. Upon entering the house we realised that the water had inundated the floor boards by approximately 15 cm. This was a peak height of approximately 3.95 metres above natural ground level. The house was extremely hot and sweaty and I opened all windows and doors to allow it to cool; it was becoming a sauna due to water under the house and the sunny day. I wanted to prevent as much damage as possible.

19. The water had damaged all the gyprock walls, cabinetry, the wooden floor boards were warped, fridges, beds, carpets, electrical wiring, baths and other miscellaneous items.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

21. The recovery process to initially evacuate and clean up, followed by the long task of repairing our house, not to mention the loss of personal property has been financially difficult, arduous and stressful and has also resulted in significant time off work for my fiancé and myself and my immediate family. Since the flood, our land values have dropped significantly and after debating and obtaining engineering costs to raise our renovated house higher, we simply could not afford to further increase the height of our home. Additionally weighing into this argument, was the question my architect and I debated; what height would we raise it to? We could spend an additional \$100,000 raising it again to BCC's new 1.0m above the 2011 flood level, but who knows what the levels could be next time. If circumstances had of been different in this flood, more like the 1974 floods, and it had continued to rain in our immediate catchment, it is very likely we would have seen at least 1m over what we had. This is obviously very concerning with regards to any future flooding, especially coming into a reportedly bad wet season where the dam levels are at a very comparable percentage to where they sat this time last year. We are also concerned that this new arbitrary flood level is a knee jerk reaction, one that is not validated by any

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actual flood modelling and one that results in our home no longer being flood compliant, which is of course a concern if we ever try and sell the property.


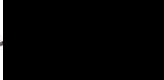
22. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2011 I submitted a letter to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry outlining my thoughts with regards to the failure of the Q100 flood level, closure of the Milton/Auchenflower drain culvert, the dam and dredging of the Brisbane River. I am able to produce this report.

**Exhibit:                      Submission to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry dated the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**Marked Exhibit No/...**

**P.McCULLOCH**

Justices Act 1886	
I acknowledge by virtue of section 110A(5)(c)(ii) of the Justices Act 1886 that:	
(1)	This written statement by me dated 12/09/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 8 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and
(2)	I make this statement knowing that, if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for stating in it anything that I know is false.
 .....Signature	
Signed at ....Brisbane....this....15 <sup>TH</sup> ..day of.....September.....2011	

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