

**SUBMISSION TO QUEENSLAND FLOODS  
COMMISSION  
ADDRESSING ISSUES RAISED BY THE 2010/2011  
FLOODS  
IN SOUTH QUEENSLAND SPECIFICALLY IN TOOWOOMBA AND  
LOCKYER VALLEY**

As a result of the January 2011 floods in the Toowoomba/Lockyer Valley area, as a resident of the city of Toowoomba for over 50 years and during that time a resident of Prince Henry Heights for over 20 years, I take this opportunity of sharing experiences and making observations of the conditions and outcomes of a very tragic period of time for our city and neighbouring areas. My specific comments refer to personal observations, experiences and connections from being an observant resident in my community and having a real good connection with the environment in which I live and work. While in making my submission I wish to state that personally, no property was affected by the floods to warrant any insurance claim nor was any flood relief assistance sought from any flood appeal/benefit.

My comments are as a concerned resident in simple terms, with a series of observations and questions that perhaps contribute to the 'big picture' of ensuring our community is saved from future physical, property and emotional distress that was experienced on January 10 and the weeks leading to this event. It is my hope that there may be some part of this report that will make a difference and further add to the big plan for this community and those nearby.

**In simple terms, large volumes of rainfall, falling on already saturated ground running down hill on the side of a mountain, can only do one thing – continue to flow and eventually spread over a flat plain and continue to flow in a wall of water. From my observations this is what appeared to occur on the escarpment in Toowoomba into the Lockyer Valley.**

I have included a series of photographs that are referred to in my report as an example of my experiences and observations; I also have attachments of research information documents that may be of interest for to the Queensland Flood Commission.

## **THE WEATHER AND REPORTING OF CONDITIONS**

Attached– List of events reported from December 1, 2010 to January 11, 2011.

The list attached is one compiled with mention of weather, floods, cautions and similar stories of interest to this community as presented by the local newspaper The Chronicle. These events and coverage were extensive over the period December 1, 2010 to January 11, 2011 and very informative to the community of the effect the weather was having on our community. While this time was continually highlighted by headlines such as 'wetter than average', "rain cause havoc", "heavy rain wreck havoc", "too much rain" "regions mop up", "flood waters top up dams for 10 years", 'landslides take toll', 'desperate times', "drenched", "sudden deluge batters", "dams hit spill points" – it was apparent these were conditions not experienced for decades(if at all). The message was very clear and warning signs for caution were being seen in many areas.

Attached – Deluge problems at hot spots. – The Chronicle Friday January 7, 2011

–"Deluge causes chaos on roads" – Friday January 7, 2011 highlighted various 'hot spots' in Toowoomba city i.e. James and Kitchener sts and Dent Street where flash flooding was being experienced throughout much of this week.

Attached – Torrential rain report. – The Chronicle Wednesday 17, 2010  
Attachment from The Chronicle Wednesday February 17, 2010 –  
Torrential rain sparks flash flood reflects the same 'hot spot' from torrential rain from the previous year in 2010 – this was a known trouble spot and this scene was repeated in 2011.

Suggestion for Improvement of this major highway intersection needs to be investigated.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD OBSERVATIONS**

**Attached - Map East Toowoomba**

An attached map (Prince Henry Heights/Withcott) of the eastern escarpment of Toowoomba which includes the Prince Heights/Withcott/Range Highway area is the neighbourhood which observations had been made since early December 2010 until mid-January 2011. As a long term resident of Prince Henry Drive for over 20 years the normally leafy, hilly suburb with a collection of residential properties and parkland offers a mix of 1960's plus to modern day architecture with dense bushland and nature reserve. A feature of this area is meandering springs and waterfalls which for decades had been a victim of drought and little or no water flow was evident.

As a resident living at one of the highest points of the drive, it was apparent that for many weeks, concerns were raised with the volume of water flowing along neighbourhood streets, down the hilly slopes into these catchment areas with runoff of rivers of water causing localised flooding to streets, damage to properties with landslip and the collapse of retaining walls, insufficient drainage to handle water which resulted in sewage overflow, landslip in the reserve known as the Scenic Drive. It was noticed that this drive had been closed to traffic with the locking of the permanent gates to the area the week prior to January 10 due to excessive landslip and damage to the guard rails and infrastructure of this drive making the area unsafe to motor vehicles and cyclists. This area at "the top of the mountain" where flooding would be least expected was starting to create problems of it's own that had not been witnessed in decades previously.

**Attached photos (disc enclosed) - Sunday January 9, 2011 with the conditions of the area on Prince Henry Scenic Drive.**

**Prince Henry Drive Closure**

**Photographs - 1PHD-Jan 9 to 13PHD-Jan 9 - 14 photographs**

This excessive flow of water was rushing down the side of the area known as Redwood Park into the neighbouring Withcott area. The flow of water down the mountain was likened to the noise of a tropical waterfall – fast flowing and covering a vast area of this location. The damage being caused to vegetation was significant on the weekend Saturday January 8 and Sunday January 9 when the attached photographs were taken. It was obvious the greater problem would be experienced by the community of Withcott and surrounds. It was at this time Sunday January 9 at 11am that attempts were made to contact Lockyer Valley Regional Mayor Steve Jones to raise concerns for the Withcott area with no success via home phone and mobile, an email was forwarded at 11.16am.

**Attached copy of email – Email of Lockyer Valley Mayor**

It was becoming apparent that the region at the base of the Toowoomba Range would, if the rain continued, experience severe flooding.

**Attached photos (disc enclosed) – Sunday January 15, 2011 with conditions of the area on Prince Henry Scenic Drive**

**Photographs - 2PHD – Jan 15 to 5PHD –Jan 15 – 4 photographs**

### **TOOWOOMBA/QUEENS PARK AREA**

The rain continued in Toowoomba for most of the afternoon of Sunday January 9 with a deluge for approximately 4 hours from lunch to 4pm. On a visit through the Toowoomba CBD and in particular the Queens Park area in Hume Street, surface water flowed over the parkland which resembled a lake and the volume of water in the channels continued to rise and increase in intensity.

Attached photographs show areas of Queens Park in flood (disc enclosed) – Sunday January 9, 2011  
Photographs - Torrential Rain around Toowoomba – 10 photographs

By this time in the afternoon vehicles parked in Hume Street were starting to float along the side of the road on Sunday January 9.

### **TOOWOOMBA/JAMES AND KITCHENER/LAKE ANNAND**

Continuing along Kitchener Street over James Street to Lake Annand, cnr Perth and Mackenzie sts the volume of water again caused concerns and it was at this point police patrol cars closed the road at South and Mackenzie sts.

Attached photographs show these points of concern in this area of Lake Annand (disc enclosed)– Sunday January 9, 2011  
Photographs - Torrential Rain around Toowoomba – 10 photographs

While long time residents had witnessed flooding in many of these areas on previous occasions over many years, this was a situation that was starting to feel like something that had not been experienced in Toowoomba previously.

It is well known that December and January are times when local and state government authorities have reduced staffing due to annual leave and those resources were stretched and in some areas limited due to the volume of incidents being reported and needing attention.

**Perhaps this needs to be reviewed.**

The weather forecasts had been reported to this community and throughout Queensland from early December and the storm cells had intensified. The alerts to residents and road closures for 'normal' localised flooding in streets and areas known to concern residents were addressed on an "as required basis". In the 24 hours to January 10, perhaps recognised professionals in town planning and management may have been directed to monitor and help manage a plan purely from the observations around the city. The conditions were unusual and increasingly alarming to the well being and safety of residents.

**Who was watching the day to day/hour to hour incidents that were occurring to make decisions regarding the safety of our community? What authorities were in the community monitoring the levels of the catchment areas around the city and noting the obvious changes occurring?**

It is my hope that this submission, while small in respect of the big problems to be dealt with, with these details, photographs and facts may assist and lead to the implementation of a plan that will ensure our city and its community have less a chance of experiencing such a tragic series of events for the future. There is a need for improvements in catchment areas that have been known trouble spots for decades, an education to residents on how best to deal with such extreme conditions, rigid policing of future development and perhaps a Hotline where developing problems can be registered with this information then monitored by authorities to best manage such conditions 24/7 when these wet conditions cause a threat to our community.

While this has been a tragic event for our communities, there is hope that as a community we can be better informed, educated and assisted to protect us – to protect life, community property, private residences and infrastructure.

Report and comments submitted by  
Barbara McGovern

  
Toowoomba. 4350

## EVENTS LEADING TO FLOODS IN TOOWOOMBA/LOCKYER VALLEY AND REGION

From December 2010 to January 11, 2011

December 1	Wetter than average
December 2	Crops/wet
December 2 pge 2	Crops/wet continued
December 3	Wet days story
December 4	Valley farmer drowns
December 4	Rains washes out carols
December 6	Neighbours rescue
December 6 pge 2	Neighbours rescue continued
December 6 pge 3	Wet roads
December 6 pge 8	Wet weather
December 7 pge 4	Wall tumbling
December 7 pge 6	Creeks turn to rivers
December 7 pge 7	Creeks turn to rivers
December 8	Wet Outlook
December 9	Driver escapes floods
December 9 pge 7	La Nina
December 10	Mowers make hay
December 10 pge 2	continued
December 11	Council eases water restrictions
December 13	Region cops huge deluge
December 13 pge 3	Rain causes havoc

December 14	Rains finally arrive
December 15	Mayor claims flooding fears
December 17	Clean up begins after storms
December 18	Wild storms wreck havoc
December 18 pge 2	continued
December 20	Motorist washed off causeway
December 20 pge 2	Heavy rain wrecks havoc
December 20 pge 3	Cars queue as rescue crews
December 21	Rescuers capsize in flood drama
December 21 pge 2	continued
December 21	Roof top saga
December 21	Wellcamp flooding
December 22	Too much rain
December 22	Paddocks into dams
December 23	Chinchilla Floods
December 24	Chinchilla/Holiday stunt
December 24	Anxious Xmas – Chinchilla
December 24	Warwick on alert
December 27	No rain reprieve
December 27	Policeman risks life
December 28	Downs Deluge
December 28 pge 2	Towns flooded
December 28	Cause heartache
December 28	Don't be an idiot
December 28 pge 7	Steer clear of flooded roads

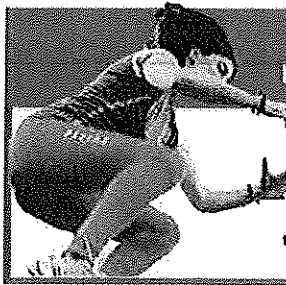
December 29	Regions mop up
December 29 pge 2	Regions mop up continued
December 29 pge 3	It's official –disaster zone
December 29 pge 4	Flood peak splits
December 29 pge 5	Chinchilla braces
December 29 pge 6	E century overflow
December 29 pge 7	Mayor expects substantial bill
December 29 pge 11	Locals airlifted
December 30	Flood waters top up dams for 10 years
December 30 pge 2	Pipeline not needed
December 30 pge 3	Road trip
December 30 pge 4	Chinchilla to brace
December 30 pge 5	Deluge
December 30 pge 6	Flood tears hole in dam
December 30 pge 7	Exhausted volunteers
December 31	Double front – A Christmas
December 31 pge 3	Cattle left stranded
December 31	2010 Xmas Floods (2 page)
December 31	Flood ravaged Dalby
December 31 pge 6	Landslides take toll
December 31 pge 7	Mining production on hold
December 31 pge 29	2010 Xmas Floods pix
December 31 pge 32	2010 Xmas floods pix



## 2011 JANUARY

January 1	Weather experts
January 1, pge 2	Experts tip more
January 1, pge 3	Condamine Floods
January 1, pge 5	New crisis at Chinchilla
January 3, pge 6	Jones slams
January 4	Flood crisis spread to roads
January 4, pge 4	New crisis as roads torn apart
January 5	Desperate times
January 5, pge 3	Flood crisis – Surat escapes flood
January 5, pge 4	Storms forecast for Downs
January 6	Flooding renews
January 6, pge 3	St. George set to fight
January 7	Drenched
January 7, pge 2	Water rips up roads
January 7, pge 3	Early storm turns creek
January 7, pge 4	Evacuees return
January 7, pge 5	Relief comes just in time
January 7, pge 6	Roadworks bill up to \$10M
January 8	Storm havoc
January 8, pge 2	Sudden deluge batters
January 8, pge 3	Grantham suffers second flood
January 8, pge 7	Dams hit spill points
January 10	Hundreds visit dams
January 10, pge 3	Flash flooding closes roads
January 10, pge 4	Rainfall pushes up dam levels
January 10, pge 6	Floods inundate townships
January 10, pge 7	Scenic drive closed

January 11	4 die in flash flood
January 11, pge 2	Deluge claims cars
January 11, pge 3	Pair perish in torrent
January 11, pge 4	Creek hits 3.85 m wall
January 11, pge 5	Rainfall set to ease
January 11, pge 6	Downpour leaves town under water
January 11, pge 7	State, councils facing huge repair
January 11, pge 8	Residents wary of rising creek.



# Jump into healthy new year

**THE** new year resolutions have been made, and in many cases already broken, but there are 12 long months ahead and you need to be in the best shape to tackle them. In order to get you off on the

right foot The Chronicle will next week run a series of features to help you jump into 2011. The series will take a holistic approach to your wellbeing. We take a look at the top 25

foods you should work into your diet to get your body into top shape and also some vital health checks to keep it there. The Chronicle will also give you some tips on how to make sure your career is heading in

the right direction. Watch out for the Jump 2011 series next week and have a happy and healthy new year with The Chronicle. The first in the series starts on Tuesday.

## Deluge hits Toowoomba

# Roadworks bill up to \$10m

TOOWOOMBA Regional Council is undertaking a region-wide assessment of flood damage to ensure public safety and to begin urgent road maintenance. Mayor Peter Taylor said council officers were checking infrastructure damage after some

of the worst flooding along the Condamine River, particularly in southern and western floodplain areas, for more than 50 years. "Our first priority is to ensure public safety in all circumstances," he said. "Initial checks indicate \$8

million to \$10 million would be the minimum roadwork repair bill for our region's council roads. "This figure would be expected to rise given the potential for more storms and wet weather across summer. "Council crews are performing

maintenance where and when possible on the most urgent cases. "The first priority is to ensure main highways are in a safe condition and open to traffic." Cr Taylor said more extensive work would proceed once rain eased.

### Damage bill

- \$8-\$10 million minimum
- Figure to rise with more wild weather predicted
- Major damage in southern and western floodplain areas
- First priority is road safety
- Extensive repairs to proceed once rain eases



Toowoomba experienced a good drenching yesterday morning. Here, the creek overflows near the corner of James and Kitchener streets. PICTURE: CALLUM JOHNSON

See our gallery of pictures at [www.thechronicle.com.au](http://www.thechronicle.com.au)



Dent Street resembles a river as flash floods overflow from gutters. PICTURE: BEV LACEY

# Deluge causes chaos on roads



By CALLUM JOHNSON  
c@lum.johnson@thechronicle.com.au

YESTERDAY'S heavy rain caused traffic chaos in Toowoomba, blocking vehicles, flooding roads and damaging the Warrego Highway.

All lanes of the Toowoomba Range in both directions were closed yesterday morning for several hours, after flash flooding created landslides on the highway.

Once motorists managed to reach the bottom of the Range, the rest of the journey wasn't too much better.

The rains damaged the section of road between Withcott and Helidon, developing big potholes and even closing that section of road for a short time.

Murphy's Creek Road, an exit from the Warrego Highway at

Withcott, remained closed late yesterday afternoon.

The usual Toowoomba flood-prone hot-spots experienced a good drenching, including the intersection of James and Kitchener streets which was closed to all but the largest vehicles and car drivers with more audacity than sense.

While the Warrego Highway from Toowoomba to Brisbane was reopened later in the day, the section further west of Toowoomba, between Jondaryan and Bowenville, remained closed late yesterday afternoon.

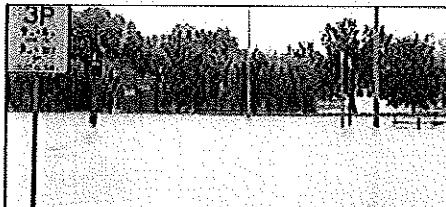
The highway is open with caution at Miles and Chinchilla, although water may still remain on the roads.

The Leichhardt Highway from Miles to Condamine is open with caution, although access to Condamine is still unavailable.

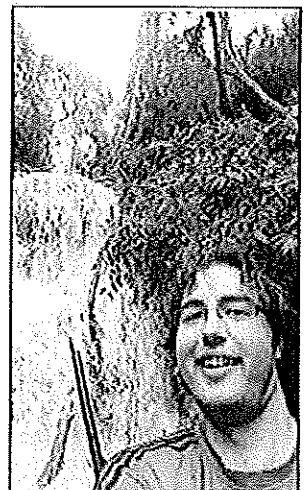
For a constantly updated list of road closures, visit [www.131940.qld.gov.au](http://www.131940.qld.gov.au)



Dent Street pedestrians take shelter under umbrellas.



Floodwater inundates Kitchener Street during yesterday's downpour.



Luke Burrow enjoys the fast-flowing water at Highfields Falls.

# HOW CAN I GROW MY BUSINESS WHEN I CAN'T FIND AN APPRENTICE?

Our new Trades Talk section is a great new tool for tradies, with equipment & legal news, business management advice, & great opportunities to grow. Another reason to read your local newspaper every day in 2011.

The Chronicle

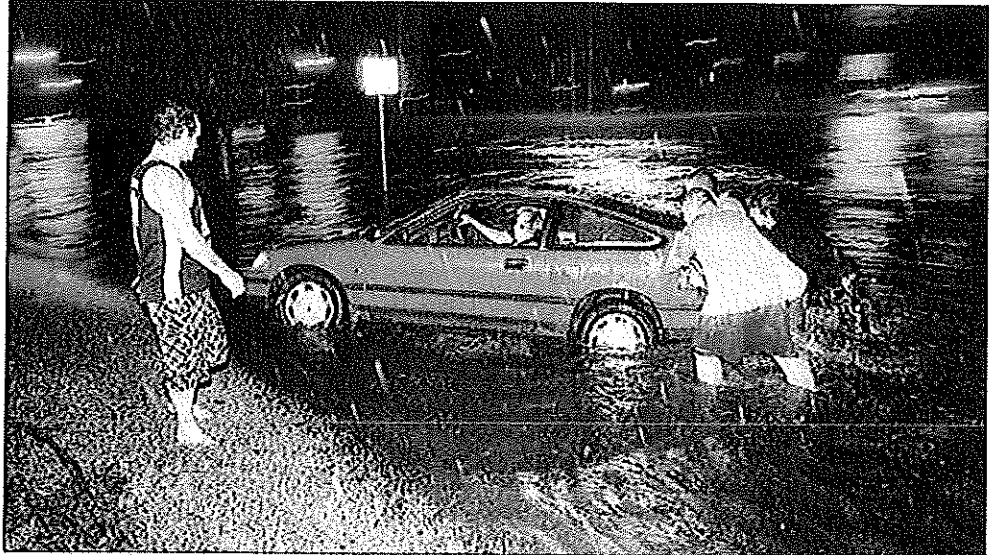


NEW IN 2011

**INSIDE: Councillors kept in dark on budget talks: P. 3**

# The Chron

Wednesday, February 17, 2010



Onlookers help a stranded motorist trapped by flood waters at the intersection of James and Kitchener streets.

PICTURE: KEVIN FARMER

# Torrential rain sparks flash flood

A FLASH flood which swept through Toowoomba left motorists stranded, SES crews busy, roads and bridges damaged. Storm cells dumped more than 120mm of rain on many areas of the city, in the biggest 24-hour rain event in 11 years.

Weather wrap: P. 4-5

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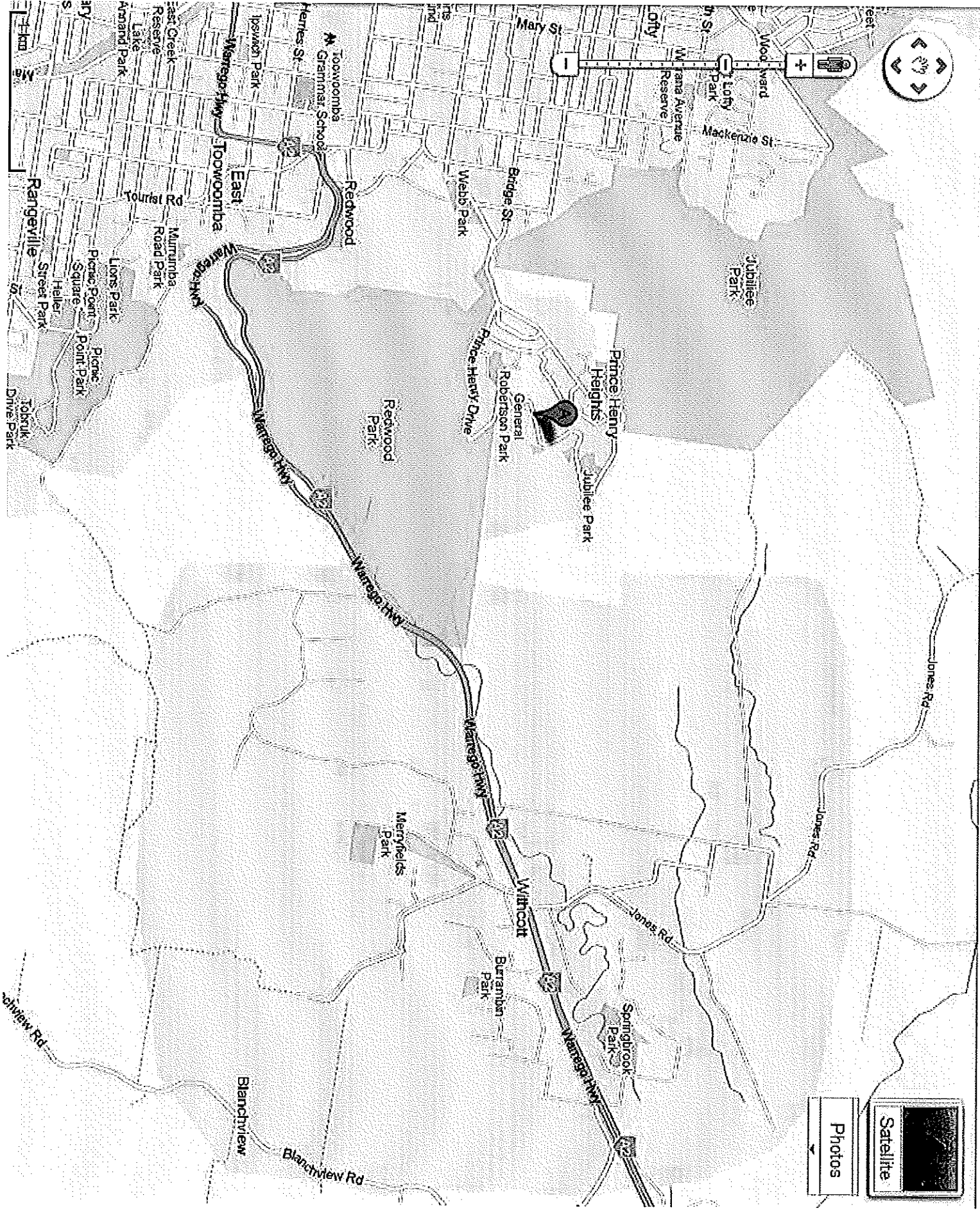
**CHECK OUT**



"See us first or see

**TOOWOOMBA**

One Hour & James St. Toowoomba  
See Car: T



**RE: Flooding at Withcott**

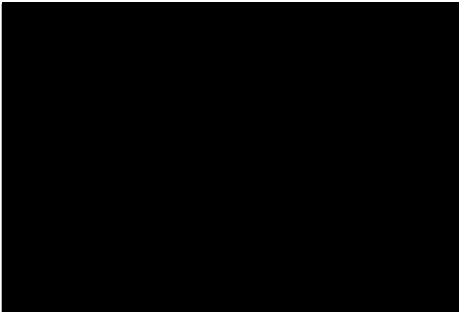
**From:** Mayor [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 10 January 2011 5:22:05 PM  
**To:** Barbara Osborne [REDACTED]

Dear Barbara

I acknowledge receipt of your email to the Mayor. I thank you for this information and I will ensure the Mayor receives it.

Regards, Jenny

*Please consider the environment before printing this email*



**From:** Barbara Osborne [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, 9 January 2011 11:16 AM  
**To:** Mayor  
**Subject:** Re: Flooding at Withcott

Hi Steve

Have tried to call a couple of times and the phone has rung out at home and mobile.

Thought you may be interested in this information. While I know these are Toowoomba issues it may effect your area at Withcott!

Having seen the recent flood waters in Withcott and along the highway, it seems to me that as a resident of Prince Henry Heights much of this water may be flowing down the range via Redwood Park and into the creeks at your end. There has been excessive water as you have seen and unfortunately water does need to run down hill!!

Today the scenic drive at Prince Henry has been closed to vehicles and there now appears to be a considerable landslip and water problem - but something may concern you that on the Withcott side of the escarpment, a local resident has a dam perched on the side of the escarpment (Withcott side) above the drive. In the past there has not been the rain and water to create a problem but over the last month there is an ongoing flow of water from this dam/lake. It may benefit you to check on this, as a matter of caution, if the dam/lake did break its bank all that water would flow down the range and from my local knowledge of the area, would flow into Withcott somewhere via the creeks. While I'm not sure of the volume of water, I think any further problems that can be avoided may be a help to you.