

TO: QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
FROM: JOHN GRANT – [REDACTED] LONGMAN TERRACE CHELMER BRISBANE
SUBJECT: SUBMISSION RELATING TO ISSUES OF FLOOD PREPAREDNESS RELEVANT TO NEXT SUMMER'S WET SEASON (PARTICULARLY DAM OPERATIONS, EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS AND RESPONSES)
DATE: 10/03/2011

The Honorable Justice Catherine Jones

As background, our home at the above address was flooded in all living areas on January 11 2011. The only area not flooded was the bedroom level on the upper floor. The level of the main living area that was flooded was constructed in 1996 to Brisbane City Council's then standard based on flood modeling post the construction of Wivenhoe Dam. Prior to the flood, the property was valued at approximately \$5 million. Repairs to the house, land and a river retaining wall are estimated at between \$450,000 and \$550,000. We are in discussions with our insurance company but it is unlikely the damage will be covered. What is not covered by any insurance policy is the emotional damage that has been and is still being done to our family and the dramatic loss in asset value of our property particularly given it is likely uninsurable in the future.

Dictionary.com defines preparedness/prepare as 'to put things or oneself in readiness; to get ready'. In order to be prepared one needs timely information and, on the basis of that timely information, one needs to understand the options available and from those options, to decide a specific plan of action.

In considering preparedness relevant to next summer's wet season, we must learn from the recent experience. To do so two fundamental questions MUST be answered:

1. Was the Brisbane River flood avoidable?
2. What could have been done for it to be avoided?

If the flood could have been avoided, the answers to optimum preparedness could be entirely different if the flood was unavoidable.

It is therefore vital that your inquiry categorically answers these two questions.

Without these answers, but reflecting on my experience in relation to preparedness for the flood having returned early from holidays and being in the house from Monday 10th January, causes me to ask the following:

1. As I recall, in December Lord Mayor Campbell Newman advised the people of Brisbane in a television interview that those affected by the 1974 flood should not to go far from home for Christmas holidays. Why was this direct warning not taken seriously by the authorities and communicated with urgency to all who could potentially be affected? As I also recall, when similar comments were made by the Premier in the media, why also did these go

unheeded? The Commission must be able to get access to these comments and deliberate upon the appropriateness of such comments as – unsupported by any organized advice to residents – these were seen as hyperbole by most viewers at the time. If we had been told that BCC had already accepted, prior to Christmas, that Wivenhoe would not provide the flood mitigation our community was led to believe it would, relevant Brisbane residents would have begun packing prior to Christmas.

2. When the Lord Mayor also commented on the weekend of January 8/9 that all properties that the BCC believed were at risk of flooding were being letter box dropped accordingly, why did we not receive such advice?
3. When it was clear that the BCC knew by its modeling every property likely to be flooded, why couldn't this information including anticipated heights be accessible through any of the BCC website, the BCC call centre or the SES call centre?
4. Why was the BCC website inaccessible from early evening on Monday 10th?
5. Why was it that when an inquiry was made of the SES on Monday 10th as to whether Longman Terrace was on their list of streets that could be flooded, their answer was no?
6. Why was it that when I made a desperate inquiry through a private connection I have directly to the Flood Operations Centre on Tuesday 11th, I was told that the expected height of the flood was to be 1metre below the 1974 level – the actual final level? Why was this information not made available to Brisbane residents through all media outlets given it was known to Flood Operations?
7. Why was Wivenhoe Dam allowed to go from 110% capacity on Friday 7th January to 147% by early Monday 10th January without increasing releases? Why weren't the levels of Wivenhoe not made available via an appropriate web site continuously through the period from early January?
8. Why did the peak flood on Wednesday 12th drop so quickly? In spite of the Lord Mayor's additional predicted peaks on Thursday 13th and Friday 14th, the flood had receded entirely from all our property when we returned early on Friday 14th. By being allowed to drop so quickly, many reaches along the river and the boulder wall on the river bank on our and our neighbour's properties collapsed some days later under the hydrostatic pressure within the waterlogged banks causing additional massive damage. Why was the receding of the flood not controlled?
9. A removal truck I'd been able get hold of on the evening of Tuesday 11th was turned back at a road closure near Brisbane markets and had to travel through the city to get to Longman Tce wasting a valuable 1.5 hours. Why was it that road closures as they occurred were not readily available on the BCC website, over the radio or via the BCC's Alert text messaging?

Yours sincerely



John Grant